

The Free Press' Short Story

THE LOCKED ROOM

HARRIET LUMMUS SMITH

THE door into Ralph's room was shut. Edna still thought of it as Ralph's room although the boy had been gone almost two weeks. He was one of the impetuous students of whom Foster College always had its full quota, a person who wears shabby clothes, who never invited to join football, and who eked out meagre funds by doing odd jobs for the townspeople. Ralph had worked at McKenzie's for his board and room.

She put her hand upon the knob and turned it. Then she started, uttered an exclamation, and repeated the operation. The door remained shut. It was locked. The girl stood staring at it blankly, as she tried to collect her thoughts. As soon as Ralph had left, she and Marietta had cleared the room, and had put it in order. It had not been occupied since, and yet the door was locked. She felt for the key, but it was not in evidence. Stopping, she put her eye to the key hole. The key was on the inside.

Edna was conscious of a chilly sensation along her spine. She went to the head of the stairs and called Marietta. "Did you call, Miss Edna?" "Come up here, Marietta. Quick!"

"There was a contagious excitement back of the authoritative words, and the stool would have been hurrying up."

"What's the matter?" "There's somebody in Ralph's room."

"Somebody in Ralph's room? Why, what makes you think so?" "The door's locked on the inside."

"Is your grandpa in there?" "No, he's in the garden."

"Then Mr. Phillip must have come." "Why, he doesn't get here till the four o'clock train, Marietta."

Marietta's eyes opened wide, showing a ring of white around the pupils. "But that's all there is."

Edna understood the ambiguous remark. With her grandfather in the garden and her brother steaming homeward on the afternoon express, there was no one who had a right to be in that room. She said quietly, "I'm going out on the roof and look in the window."

"Goodness, Miss Edna, I couldn't be bred to do such a thing."

"The girl did not reply. She opened the window of the room next to that which Ralph occupied, and stepped lightly out on the piazza roof. As Edna approached the next window, she was inclined to think that her courage was inferior to Marietta's. Her heart beat hard as she peered through the glass. When a voice reached her ears, she started violently.

Marietta was speaking from the window of the small room the girl had just quitted. "Well, do you see anybody?"

"No, I don't." "The sound of her own voice made Edna feel bolder. She tried the window, and it raised at a touch. Putting her head inside, she looked all about the room. If anyone were there, he was in the closet."

Suddenly the girl made up her mind. She swung over the window sill, crossed the room with a rush, and unlocked the door. She thung it wide, and found herself face to face with Marietta. That intrepid woman had possessed herself of a trunk strap, and was carrying it like a weapon.

Edna was glad of this ally. She returned to the closet, and opened it. Though the room was small, the closet was of old-fashioned spaciousness, and a thorough search was necessary for her to be certain it was empty. "There's nobody here, Marietta, but it's the strangest thing."

"I suppose your grandpa did it in one of his absent-minded spells."

"But he couldn't have gotten out of the room except by the window, and I know he didn't do that. Besides the window of the storeroom was locked! Oh! The closing exclamation was almost a scream. Marietta started, and tightened her hold on the trunk strap, but Edna's gaze was fixed on the bed.

"Marietta! Somebody has been sleeping in that bed!" "Who, Miss Edna?" "The maid—was white to her lips."

"I haven't the least idea. But we made that bed up fresh, you remember, after Ralph left, and somebody has slept in it."

Marietta drew near and nodded her agreement. Indeed, a very casual examination proved the truth of Edna's statement. The bed had been occupied, and the covers drawn back in places somewhat carelessly, and the pillows leaned one against the other, instead of standing erect as Edna and Marietta had left them nearly two weeks before. As nothing more could be done until Phillip should arrive, the two went downstairs, very much mystified.

When the grandfather was questioned later, he asked in rather a bored manner, "Why should I sleep in any room but my own, my dear child?"

As everyone had been questioned, the anxious household could do nothing but wait as patiently as possible for Phillip's coming.

When he arrived, he had exciting news of his own to communicate. He had come up from the city with one of the Palmer boys who had told him of a singular robbery that had taken place in his home. "Dear Edna—You were kind enough to say you wanted to hear from me, and I'm glad to report that everything is going fine. I have a job in the mill

here that pays very well, and I'm living at a cheap boarding house, so as to save as much as possible for my Junior year in college. I spend my evenings studying or reading at the public library. In this hot weather I practically have the room to myself.

"You can't imagine how I'm looking forward to next fall. Last year was the happiest time I have ever known. I don't believe I could have worked anywhere else where I'd have been treated with such kindness. When I make good, Edna, I'll try to show you how much I appreciate it all."

"If you ever and time to answer this, direct to the General Delivery here. Give my respects to your grandfather, and tell Marietta I often think of her blouses when I'm eating the cobblestones called by that name here. Yours, Ralph."

Having finished the letter, Edna deliberately tore it into bits. She was sure Phillip was wrong, but she was aware that few people knew Ralph as she did. There must be the most vigilant detective, barely all an innocent man needed for proving his innocence was a little time.

A quarter of an hour before luncheon, a car drew up to the door and Mr. McKenzie alighted. Edna, startled and a face with him, she forgot her apprehension on his account, and burst into tears. "Tut! Tut!" exclaimed Mr. McKenzie taken aback. "What are you crying for?"

"Oh, Grandfather, your safe has been robbed. Those Liberty Bonds!" "Who gave you permission to go to the safe?" Mr. McKenzie's white eyebrows were drawn into a formidable frown, but Edna was too surprised by his composed acceptance of the loss, to be troubled by his look of displeasure.

"Phillip wanted me to see if anything was missing. Phillip, think—Oh, Grandfather!"

The story came from her with a rush. Her grandfather listened intently; then he said, "Where is Phillip?" "At the Palmers, I suppose."

"Find his number for me," Mr. McKenzie directed and walked to the telephone.

Edna did as she was told, and he gave the number in a fashion that insured prompt connection. "Is Phillip McKenzie there?" he demanded, evidently in answer to somebody's interrogation. Hello, "No? Then when he does come, tell him his grandfather wishes to see him at once."

"He hung up the receiver and went into the library."

"Haven't you forgotten about the automobile, Grandfather?" "No. The man can wait."

The day wore on, and neither Edna nor the old man spoke again till Phillip arrived. He came in looking rather uncomfortable, like a small boy who does not know whether he is in disgrace or not, and said by way of carrying out the situation, "There seems to be a car waiting."

"So there is," Mr. McKenzie exclaimed. "Take a look at it, Edna, and see how you like it."

Edna went obediently to the window and her apathy at once changed to enthusiasm. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "Isn't it lovely and shining!"

"New," her grandfather remarked. He paused and added, "and it's yours."

"Grandfather!"

"We live quite a distance from town, and you have a great many errands to do. I thought this was as good a way to use those Liberty Bonds as any. If you get to be a first-class driver, some of these days I will let you take me out for a spin."

Edna thought for a little that her happiness was complete, but she knew better about a week later, when Charles Fawcett dropped in. He had been one of Phillip's college friends, and it seemed a happy coincidence that he should be in town at the same time as Phillip. Of course he was promptly asked to stay to dinner and spend the night, and he was promptly accepted.

"It's been a long time since we've had the pleasure of entertaining you, Charles," said Mr. McKenzie in his stately way, as all sat down to the dinner table.

The young fellow laughed. "Not as long as you think, sir."

The family waited smilingly for the explanation. Charles was always joking. He went on rather stammeringly for him. "I've been trying to get up my courage to confess ever since I got here, but it's harder than I thought."

"What on earth are you talking about?" cried Phillip impatiently.

Charles smiled him promptly. "Some of your business, old man. I'm apologizing to your sister." He turned appealingly to Edna. "You see, I was here about two weeks ago on my way north. Got in late, and couldn't find a room anywhere. Everything full up."

"Why didn't you come out here?" exclaimed Mr. McKenzie.

"Why, I happened to run across Sara Kent, and she told me you and Edna had gone to the shore that day, and that the house was empty. About midnight I made-up my mind I'd come out here and sleep on the porch if I couldn't get in. As it turned out, though, I did get in; I climbed up on the piazza roof, and the window of the middle room was unlocked. I had a fine night's rest."

"Why did you lock your door?" inquired Edna demurely.

"Oh, I suppose—why, how do you know? Did I forget to unlock it? I'm afraid I'll take more than an apology to straighten things out with you."

SLATS' DIARY

BY ROSS PARQUEAR

Friday—Mr. Gillem was down to see how today and Ant Emmy was talking to him about his wife and she said I here your wife suffers a grade

doek from nervousness and Mr. Gillem replied and said weel she is pritty nervous but I think I am the witch buffers from it because she seems to rather enjoy it.

Saturday — I was out to get red of the old 2nd handed ford at last because he sez that when over the shops at a strange place every I wants to no wear

the accident happened.

Sunday—Pa got wild today that three citizens was a something here to spend there vacation and nua got a telephon call that her Ant run out east was coming. Pa sed he don't no what we are going to do so Ant Emmy sed he better get that new book of Ze stines about Relativity.

Monday—Citizen Clarence was talking to pa today and he had to sell his machens and his w diamond ring. He sed he got a cut in his salary a yr. ago but even at that he was getting along all rite till they give him an interest in the busines and now he is broke.

Tuesday—Unkel Hens neffew was a going to join up with the navy but when Ant Het found out he wood hnt to lorn a lot of mittlele terms she sed she wood cut let him go and she did.

Wednesday—Went to a church wedding tonite and the bride was very nice till the groom sed I Do and she settled down rite away. Youd think a woman all most forty wood be settled down but she wasn't.

Thursday—Toll Spitt took down his telephone last month and they a rested him and yesterday they sent him to the ark house and he sent wild lame that they give him the rite number when he got there so thats am consolation.

Worms in children work havoc. These pests attack the tender lining of the intestines and, if left to pursue their ravages unchecked, will ultimately perforate the wall, because these worms are of the hook variety that cling to and feed upon the interior surfaces. Miller's Worm Powders will not only exterminate these worms, of whatever variety, but will serve to repair the injury they have done.

THE FRUIT OF IGNORANCE

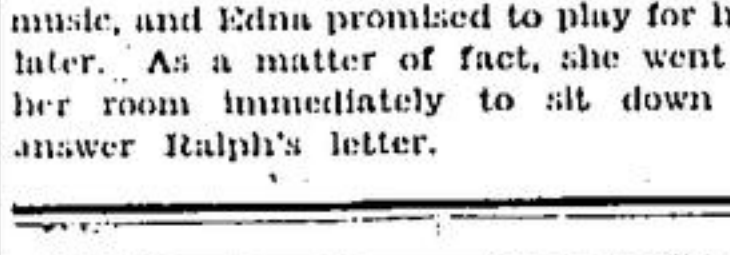
A noted English statesman, it is said, refused to meet his most prominent, political opponent. He said that if he knew his opponent, he could not dislike him, he could not denounce him. As this story suggests, it is true that most dislike is due to ignorance. We sometimes hear people say they dislike certain organizations of the force itself, an organization of men they know only one or two individuals of the race they denounce.

Some one has said that to know all is to forgive all. If this is going a little too far, the fact remains that most of our dislike, bitterness, and resentment are the fruit of ignorance.

I'm such a good shot, it's as well not to take such chances. I ring us up at any hour, but for your own sake, don't climb into our windows in the dead of night."

After dinner Charles begged for a little music, and Edna promised to play for him later. As a matter of fact, she went to her room immediately to sit down to answer Ralph's letter.

Fashions for the Smart Woman



NEW AUTUMN SUIT

Shears are busy in Paris this season, trimming away every bit of excess width from skirts. The fall suit in particular aims to present a perfectly straight line from hip to hem—none of your billowing flares for fall. In this new model of reddish-brown crepey woven, designed by Angsberner, the slim skirt is achieved by seams in front and back ending in pleats. The jacket, too, is beautifully seamed and shows just how smart decorative rows of buttons can be. Of course the draped fur collar, pulled through a loop at the left side, is the very last word.

GET THE HABIT

One of the most beautiful and sacred memories that come to man is that of his childhood wherein were associated the home life and the little country church. Regularly every Sunday morning the family speeded up the chimes, hitched old Dobbin and Emma to the wagon, the bobbed or the buggy, and all of the family, from the youngest to the oldest, went to the little chapel for Sunday School and church service. No summer sun was too hot, no winter wind was too cold.

Colonel Roosevelt attributed much of his success in life to his habit of attending church regularly. His main reason for going to church are given thus: "In the actual world, a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at or ignored their religious needs, is a community on the rapid down grade."

"Church work and church attendance mean the cultivation of the habit of feeling some responsibility for others."

"There are enough holidays for most of us. Sundays differ from other holidays in the fact that there are fifty-two of them every year—therefore on Sunday go to church."

"Yes, I know all the excuses. I know that one can worship the Creator in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in a man's own home by his radio. But I also know as a matter of cold fact the average man does not thus worship."

"He may not hear a good sermon at church. He will hear a sermon by a good man who, with his good wife, is engaged all week in making hard lives a little easier."

"He will listen to and take part in reading some beautiful passages from the Bible. And if he is not familiar with the Bible he has suffered a loss."

"He will take part in singing some good hymns."

"He will meet and nod or speak to good, quiet neighbors. He will come away feeling a little more charitable toward all the world, even toward those excessively foolish young men who regard church-going as a soft performance."

"I advocate a man's joining in church work for the sake of showing his faith by his works."

SERVEN 'EM RIGHT

A Detroit judge has the right idea of the way to deal with drunken drivers. This judge sends intoxicated drivers of automobiles to the workhouse for from ten days to six months. In addition, he revokes their licenses to drive a car for a year. Why not be even more severe with the man who violates the law by selling liquor which produces drunken drivers?—American Issue.

BLUE MONDAY

"Why do you prefer your employees going to church instead of joy riding on Sunday—you're not a religious man yourself?" queried his visitor.

"Those who go to church do their sleeping there, the others spend most of Monday sleeping on the job," explained the boss.

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Great Railroad Has Fine Police Force

White gloves, part of their official dress, are especially appropriate to members of the Canadian Pacific Railway Police, not only for the smart touch thus added to their blue uniform, but because they are emblematic of the force itself, an organization of spotless reputation and unflinching courtesy. Not only is this picked body of men, uniformed and ununiformed, the safeguard of the property of the world's greatest transportation system and its thousands of patrons, but its members are friends and mentors to countless travelers in all parts of the Dominion. Wherever the company has an interest, be it a great terminal, a wharf or a vast freight yard, "the man in blue" is to be found. Many of the constabulary and their officers are experienced men and at their head is Brigadier-General E. de B. Pamel, C.M.G., D.S.O., A.D.C., a distinguished Canadian soldier with a splendid record as a staff officer during the Great War. The force has won many trophies for first-aid work and also in organization of an Ontario team having captured the Canadian police revolver championship for the whole Dominion this year.

Prize-Winning Apprentices

Considerable interest has been aroused by the performance of four young apprentices at the Canadian Pacific Railway's Angus Shops, Montreal, who captured three first prizes and one second, between them, at the Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, 1931, in the exhibit of mechanical drawings and designs. The quartette are pupils of Charles Talbot, instructor of apprentices and John Burns, works manager.

Picturo shows, left to right: C. R. Haddley, 23, machinist apprentice since 1928, who took first prize in the Electrical Section, as a first attempt.

A. W. Paulsonbridge, 23, joined as carpenter apprentice in 1926, took first prize in the Structural Section and second in the Steam Section in 1931 and first in Internal Combustion and third in Steam in 1930. In 1929, he was first in Steam and second in Structural.

Phillippe Landry, 26, joined as shop boy in 1922 and became carpenter apprentice in 1925, took first prize in Internal Combustion, having been second in Structural in 1930 and second in Hydraulic in 1929.

M. Rochon, 19, machinist apprentice since 1929, captured first prize in the Electrical Section, as a first attempt.