

The Man Who Called at Midnight.

I.

Thorne was undressing when a knock called him to the door.

The man who came in did not apologize for calling at such an hour, but walked past Thorne to the centre of the room, drew an overcoat off his sturdy shoulders, and cast himself into a chair, the comfort of which he evidently appreciated. He was in evening clothes, without bloomish.

Thorne was irritated, then amused. He suspended judgment until the caller said:

"Mr. Thorne, good-morning!"

"You are hyper-accurate, sir," Thorne retorted. "It is only fifteen minutes past midnight, and you are in full evening dress."

"As you will, sir—as you will; but as I said, good-morning. May I speak with you quietly and in confidence for ten minutes?" The stranger grew affably business-like.

Thorne could not escape a smile as he said:

"You came in of your own accord, my dear sir. Suppose you proceed likewise with your business. My only condition is that I be allowed to enter my bed in ten minutes."

"Good!" the well-dressed intruder said, smacking his hands together. "You are the right sort. I wish I had known you years ago."

"Thank you," Thorne spoke so gravely that the visitor looked sharply at him, as if searching for signs of veiled sarcasm.

"My name I do not give," he proceeded. "You know, and all about you—or enough. I know you for one of the cleverest financial editors in London. I am a gentleman who lives by the goodness of humanity. I subsist by my wits as applied to what others have acquired. I—"

"You are, then," Thorne put in, "a lawyer?"

"Yes"—with a profound bow—"a burglar."

"A what?" Thorne gasped. "You misunderstand. I said 'a lawyer.'"

"And I replied, 'Yes, a burglar.'"

We thieves draw few class distinctions, you know. I am a burglar. Five of my assistants and myself are preparing to enter the vault of the Mid-Counties Bank in Chapel street, through an opening in the foundation which we have been drilling for six weeks from the adjoining house, which we lease. Sixty seconds of careful work will pierce the last section of steel lining about the vault, and let us inside."

"But, man," Thorne cried, "what are you here telling me this for? Don't you know that if what you say is true I'm the last man you could be telling it to in safety? If you knew as much as you profess about me you would understand that some of my best friends are in the Mid-Counties Bank, and that you will no sooner be out of my rooms this morning than I shall send a warning which will make your five worthy safe-breakers and yourself decidedly uncomfortable—if what you say is true. Don't you think, though, that you had better leave me to my bed for the rest of the night? Suppose you meet me at the 'Dawn' office at one o'clock this afternoon."

The stranger ignored the suggestion smiling again as he resumed:

"Mr. Thorne, you have discovered my very reason for coming here. My purpose is to enter the vault of the Mid-Counties Bank the night after certain large sums of cash, aggregating £500,000, as I understand, are placed there. The deal will be secret, and I can learn the exact date only through assistance. That you can, and doubtless will, give. I am aware how well you know MacArdle and Spurnley in the bank."

"I ask you to see them, and ascertain for me the date of the arrival of this vast temporary deposit. I will then complete my attack on the vault, which can be no possibility fail. You will receive £10,000 in cash for your part of the work, with which you will in no wise be connected, except as I suggest. I must have accurate information of the date of the deposit. This is my one safe way of securing it. What do you say?"

Thorne was already measuring the man's well-set figure, and longing to have his boots. The burglar smiled again over gleaming linen and immaculate black.

"It's of no use, Mr. Thorne. Don't think of it. You're a good man, but you can't afford to try me. Besides, I'm armed like a battleship, and burglars don't box when they can reach a knife."

"But I can, and do, refuse; and you will leave this place immediately sir!" said Thorne, boiling up, and yearning again for his boots and a good grip on a chair. "Leave at once, sir; and be sure I shall lose no time in notifying the police."

"To be sure, my dear fellow, of course!"

The burglar stretched himself, and looked about for a bigger chair. As he did so, Thorne leaped forward. The burglar wheeled, and his left hand shot forth. Thorne saw it, dropped his shoulders, and let it pass over, then swung back his own right with all his strength and weight in a mighty upper-cut aimed at the other's jugular. But the burglar, in place of dodging, threw himself on his tiptoes, and

bent forward, catching the blow harmlessly with a shoulder, and, springing back quickly, displayed an exceedingly ugly knife.

"Don't do it, Mr. Thorne," he said and still that grin and not left his lips. "It's sure death! You can't refuse. You can't warn the police. I make you a fair and plain proposition. Lend me your aid for a fee of £10,000. If you do—all's well. If you don't—why, then, my dear Mr. Thorne, I must tell you that you will be found so soundly asleep to-morrow at daybreak that your friends will not hesitate to summon an undertaker."

"You will murder me like a dog?" Thorne was all white.

"On the contrary you will die as a gentleman should, inconspicuously, and with no violence. Come, now, until to-night you may think it over. Then I must have my answer. Think it over—your friends against your life and a fortune!"

"Against my honor, man!"

"As you please; but you can't deny the fortune—£10,000 and no conditions whatever. You will pardon me, but I really must not let you move out of my sight until you have given me an answer. That will hasten your decision, I am sure, and will certainly serve me better. You may sleep and eat, but I must be your guest meanwhile."

II.

Thorne felt like a lion in a circus parade until it was time for breakfast. He got into his clothing stupidly, and led the way down to where they might eat in due seclusion. While they were finishing an omelet he looked over to where his guardian leisurely perused a morning newspaper, and spoke for the first time in hours.

"I am going to the bank as soon as we finish breakfast. I suppose you will accompany me?"

"Thank you—yes."

"You dare?"

"To be sure. Dare you challenge me?"

"I may expose you the instant we are within the doors of the bank."

"My dear Mr. Thorne," he said, "again pardon my intrusion of self into this well-ordered breakfast. But I must hasten to correct what I perceive to be an insufficient and inadequate comprehension of the very interesting circumstances in which you find yourself at present. As you know, I am not a man of violence. I do not like force, but sometimes I have to use it. On such occasions I resort to hired service, and have the work done by some menial."

"This now occurs to me as I see standing in front of the south window yonder a muscular person who undoubtedly passed the night under your windows, awaiting a possible signal from me; who has followed us here, and will by no means lose sight of us, whether we visit the bank or not. He is committed to certain instructions given by me, a part of which is a caution that at a certain sign from me he is to set in motion the machinery of my office."

The way to the bank was painfully short, Thorne thought, giving him scant time to reach some conclusion. What could he not do with £10,000? Future assured, established where the way of comfort lay open, married, and in a home of his own—something of a society man. Thorne's long professional experience showed him at a glance what £10,000 would do for him, with his friends—his well-laid, well-guarded, carefully-manipulated sphere of friends. Friends! There was the trouble.

The Mid-Counties Bank chairman had been his generous patron for ten years. He called at his house, and played golf with a nice girl that lived there. She was the chairman's daughter, and Thorne felt certain that if he asked her to share life with him she would say yes. Yet how could he ask her to share life with him on £300 a year?

The cashier was a personal friend. He knew even the clerks. They recognized him as a trusted friend of "the old man." Then, again, it was not all a question of money. The gang would murder him if he refused to assist them, just as they would remove every other obstacle to complete escape from detection.

The bank's doors stared at them, and they walked in. Still in a trance, Thorne pushed through the glass door, and in another instant stood before the chairman—his friend. The father of the nice girl looked the burglar over with business like detail as he put them both in chairs.

"Well, my boy"—the old man's eyes were shining, and Thorne saw there was no denying his confidence—"well, my boy, what is it to-day? Do you know I wouldn't have let see that pile of letters—I wouldn't have let anybody but you in here for all there is in that pile. But I can't refuse you anything, lad." One hand went over Thorne's knees.

"What's up?"

Thorne's eyes were glassing and his tongue seemed thick. Beside him the burglar sat, as imperturbable as ever, studying the ceiling critically, and Thorne knew his life was in those most merciless hands. It was like suicide. Thorne caught the glint of the chairman's eyes again, and suddenly getting up, put his back against the door and said:

"I came here to-day to ask when the Mid-Counties Bank would receive that big Government deposit. Don't stare please. That's what I came here for. What I now say is that I don't want you to answer that question, but press your police call instantly. This man is a dangerous burglar. He plans to rob the bank,

and tried to make me a party to the crime. Now we've got him here, and if we work quickly we can prevent him signalling his confederates, as he surely will do. Press your button at once, sir, and I'll keep this scoundrel busy until help comes. Ring, ring, sir—ring! Now, you villain—"

But the chairman only smiled, and the burglar laughed aloud. Thorne stared at them, like an owl at the sun. He could not understand. The burglar laughed, some more.

"He's all right," he said. Thorne roared to a chair. The chairman spoke:

"Thorne, it was a test. I wanted to try you, and my friend, the junior member of the Plympton Detective Agency, offered to assist me. I want a confidential clerk who can look after my business. I'm getting old, and the girls want me at home more. I'm satisfied that you're safe and I hereby ask you to come around and live with us, be my business representative and accept a stipend of £2,000 annually for the present. You're the kind I want. I've proved you honest. But come, what do you say?"

The chairman was smiling confidently. The ex-burglar turned the leaves of a note-book.

Thorne recoiled again, then caught himself. He had his gloves in his right hand.

"What do I say?" he whispered. His voice was gone.

The chairman looked alarmed for a moment, so white had Thorne turned. Then he touched an electric button. The door opened, and the pretty girl whom Thorne had played golf with entered. She looked at Thorne for a moment.

"I'll answer 'Yes' for Mr. Thorne," she said.—London Answers.

PSYCHIC INFLUENCE.

Remarkable Facts in the Treatment of Disease.

Concerning the curative power of hypnotism, suggestion and deception, remarkable facts are reported from the hospitals. A writer in Health, an English publication, reports one case, that of a young woman who cannot sleep without first receiving a hypodermic injection of pure water. She believes she is getting a quarter grain of morphine with each injection, and, as there is no way of her learning of the deception, the treatment works like a charm.

Another case, says a contemporary, is that of an elderly man suffering from imaginary paralysis, who could not be benefited by the use of drugs or the electric current. By pre-arranged plan he was informed by a person supposed to be uninterested in his case, that magnetism, not electricity, was what he needed, and since then he has shown marked improvement under the constant application of a wooden magnet, painted to resemble the genuine article.

Still another case is that of a woman who cannot speak a word unless she is in a stooping posture. For months her voice was lost to her altogether, but one day while bending over caressing a cat her voice returned, and since then she can only talk when her body is bent to a right angle. All efforts to relieve her were of little avail until one day her attending physician informed her that she could not be cured until she had undergone a long course of treatment, but ventured the information that she could be relieved for the period of one week by the application of "raw" electricity to her throat, taken from the city's current. Electricity was applied and the woman's voice returned, but when the week expired her voice was lost to her again.

Now and then a case presents an amusing phase. One woman possessed of the idea that her heart was growing to her side, refused to improve under the treatment accorded her, and the doctors, knowing her condition was due to hysteria, planned to get rid of her. Medicine was prescribed, made up of the most nauseating drugs and the patient was ordered to take doses hourly. After the first day's treatment the woman said she was well enough to go home, and the doctors congratulated themselves that the expelling decoction had proved successful. To their surprise, when the woman left the hospital she asked that a bottle of the medicine be given her, as it had furnished her more relief than anything she had taken. Every observing physician has noted similar cases.

MIRRORS ENRAGE THEM.

"Lions object to mirrors," observed a keeper in a menagerie. "On one occasion a looking-glass in the hands of a small boy so frightened and excited our largest lion that we feared he would injure himself. The wretched youngster had drawn a hand-mirror from beneath his coat and held it before the king of beasts. The latter looked and jumped for the rival whom he thought he saw. The bars of his cage dashed him back again and again, while he filled the whole house with terrific roars. I have known several other cases in which lions have been thrown into the wildest panic by a mirror being held up before them."

A boy of twelve years, dining at his uncle's made such a good dinner that his aunt observed, "Johnny, you appear to eat well." "Yes," replied the urchin. "I've been practising eating all my life."



DIRECT VS. INDIRECT SOIL ENRICHMENT.

Early and persistent tillage, tillage that actually keeps the leaves from showing, is fatal if well followed up. Fallows should have their quietus, now that for untold times they are again shown by tests at the Minnesota experiment station to be terrible robbers. The rapid formation of soluble plant food by the action of atmospheric agent in the constantly tilled soils in the absence of plant to absorb it, is followed by rapid leaching and a consequent loss, not only of humus and of minerals. Good crops may and do follow a fallow, but at a disastrous loss to the soil. It mortgages the future.

Now that the humus idea is in the air green manuring is pressed upon us very frequently at institutes and elsewhere. It adds, we are told, humus to the soil and this material holds water strongly, is the center of bacterial action and of chemical changes that

REACT ON SOILS.

A well fertilized soil will increase in soil humus provided a good rotation is adopted. The roots and stubble of clover, as shown by many experiments, including those of the writer, leave nearly as much organic matter in the soil as the tops remove. This being the case a crop of clover of 2½ tons makes an expensive addition to roots and stubble for green manuring that are had for nothing. As some 95 per cent. always over nine-tenths, of the weight of the roots and stubble are derived from the air, humus may actually increase in the soil as a direct result of good farming, always on condition that a rotation is adopted favoring it. The organic matter always in good soils will vary from about 100,000 to 150,000 lbs and the addition of 4,000 lbs in a crop of clover is not a great ratio of increase.

We are aware that this is not a presentation of the whole subject, but in the light of the absence of trial tests that have shown even for one year or for

A SERIES OF YEARS

a compensation for a crop to grow succeeding crops, it must be held as adequate until accurate tests demonstrate the contention of those who advise us to use one crop to feed another. Green manuring is a good plaything for the rich.

Tillage has done something, much a little and other factors have aided but the system of moderate annual manuring with something, coupled with tillage, forms the basis of the grain. It is understood of course that true chemical farming seeks to add direct plant food to the soil, and on this basis the farm has been operated. While it is not denied that the soil may be looked upon in a limited sense as a mine to be exploited, and that lime, salt and ashes and tillage while cropping, as a substitute for fallowing, may be useful aids under wise and limited conditions, the royal road to up-building poor lands and the advancement of our farming is in the main through the balanced soil ration. This way surely pays, and the other, if it enriches at all, is at the expense of the future, unless very judiciously indulged in.

RAISING PIGS.

The following from an experienced and successful hog breeder will interest farmers:—

I have had good success for several years raising pigs and pork in connection with an "all-year-round" dairy. I try to have my spring litters come in March and April, when prices are higher than for later pigs. If there is a demand, when the pigs are four weeks old I sell to neighboring farmers for from two to three dollars each; if not, I wean the pigs at that age in order to breed the sows again, and have never been able to catch them in season until the pigs have been off from three days to a week. Wheat middlings with milk is the best food to start young pigs, and should be fed often and little at a time, just what they will eat up clean each time. There is usually a good demand for them when from four to six months old, both as breeders and feeders, as many farmers if they can find good thrifty shoats, will buy them when they have extra feed. I kept high-grade Chesters, with full-blood boar, and as soon as the grass is well started in spring, ring the sows and

PUT THEM IN A PASTURE

where there is running water, aiming only to keep them in good flesh, as the grass will nearly support them. A few days before the pigs are due, the sows are placed in a pen (a box stall, or temporary shed with board or slab roof will do), where they will be dry and confined. Old sows will usually get along farrowing all right alone in warm weather, but young sows should be tampered and kept watch of, as they are apt to injure their pigs. I have saved a whole litter by staying with the sow and as fast as the pigs arrived, putting them in a basket until she was through; then by rubbing her bag she would lie down so I could place the pigs on her, and after they have once sucked there is very little danger of losing any.

Last spring many of my neighbors lost their young pigs and some their

sows as well, due, I think, to their being kept too fat and in cold quarters. I always try to keep their bowels loose by feeding something laxative, such as small potatoes, cut apples, bran mash, or roots, but as labor is expensive, very few in this section raise many roots. I also give the sows charcoal and fresh earth, and have stopped a litter of two or three weeks old from scouring by giving them a few fresh sods.

THE OLD-AGE HABIT.

Mrs. Mullaly's Advice to Those Who Are Getting Old

"For why should I look old darling? Answer me that, now!" Mrs. Mullaly demanded. She had been Honora Costigan formerly, Mrs. Morris's loving and faithful house-girl; but that was twenty years earlier. Mistress and maid had been at opposite ends of the earth in the meantime, and the mistress, who had noticeably aged, felt almost a shock of resentment at sight of the plump and buxom Nora she used to know.

"Sure, I've had me bad times and me good times, like the rest of the world," Mrs. Mullaly went on, reflectively. "But, glory be! before the bad times quite finished me the good times came again—me always leaving the door ajar to let them in d'ye mind?"

"I am older; I feel it sometimes in me poor back; but I'm not old. Whisper, darling, it ain't the years that go over; it's the heart that's inside that changes the face of us."

"'Twas a cousin of mine that taught me the truth of it, this long ago. She begun to be old the day she was born, did Katie, and when she was fourteen, looking and acting twenty, 'twas a great help to her. But when she was twenty, 'I'm getting on!' says she. When she was twenty-five, 'No,' says she to Johnny Walsh, that came a-courting, 'I'm too old and settled in me habits to be marrying.' Then when she was thirty nothing would do her but to get wid the old women and talk of the times when she and they was young."

"So the heart of her went into the face of her. It did so! I mind when she was thirty about and me over twenty, we went together one day to a big new hotel to get work. A good worker was Katie. But the Boss he looked us up and looked us down and asked his questions, and then says he, 'I'll give you a trial, my girl,' says he to me. 'But as for you,' he says to Katie, 'it's young, strong, lively women we want,' says he, 'and I'm thinking you're after mistaking this for the Old Ladies' Home, which,' says he, 'is in the next block.'"

"'O-ho!' says I to meself at that. 'Am I going out to hunt for wrinkles and rheumatism before me own mother gets gray in her hair? No, says I, and 'twas then I begun to toss me birthdays over me shoulder as fast as they came. They're all behind me glory be! where I can't fall over them.'"

"Whisper, darling," Mrs. Mullaly added, impressively, "old age is a bad habit, like drinking, and if ye give way to it ye won't so easy break it off. Sure, there's a new year to every twelve months, but that can't make ye an old woman—never, darling, until ye're willin' to be!"

LOSING A FORTUNE.

He sat in his chamber alone. The lights burned dim and the fire flickered fitfully. No raven came to flutter its black wings and cast its sombre shadow over the room, but it would scarcely have been out of place. For a long time he sat there gazing into the fire, the very personification of despair. At last he stirred uneasily and half rose from his chair. He looked at the clock. It was on the stroke of midnight.

"Only an hour ago," he muttered. "Only an hour, and it has seemed a year—a hundred years."

He sank back listlessly, broken in spirit and crushed in hope.

"One word, and a fortune is lost," he sighed, despairingly. "One little word of two letters, and \$150,000 has gone glimmering among the things that were."

He groaned in his agony, and the lights sank lower and lower, and faded away, leaving him in a gloom impenetrable.

And, gentle reader, why? Why? Because the wealthy widow without encumbrance had said "No" when he asked her to be his. Sad, wasn't it?

DO YOU BELT?

This is a question more particularly of the consideration of ladies, and it is one which we may occasionally hear one member of the fair sex address to another. The wearing of a belt decreases the size of the waist. This fact has been gleaned from military circles, where it is well known that a soldier's girth decreases after a period of service. Ladies have found out that Tommy's belt has a tendency to give him a smaller circumference at that part where his waist ought to be, and they have adopted the belt for the old, old purpose. The waist of a woman whose height is 5 feet 4 inches, judging by the Venus of Milo, should be twenty-four inches.

Coal Dealer (anxiously)—"Hold on! That load hasn't been weighed. It looks to me rather large for a ton." Driver—"Tain't intended for a ton. It's two tons." Dealer—"Beg pardon. Go ahead."