



THE SILK ENIGMA

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"ZORA, THE INVISIBLE,"
"DEATH IN THE STALLS," &c.

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START THE STORY HERE

Only one instalment of this gripping serial story has been published and by reading the synopsis below you can take up the story and enjoy its thrilling chapters. It deals with a murder in the famous silk emporium of Oxtan's in Kensington High Street, London, England.

Synopsis

Nikolas Nolescue, the departmental silk manager at Oxtan's, is discovered lying dead beneath a counter, his body wrapped in a roll of Chinese silk. The discovery is made by Phyllis Varley, first assistant in the Chinese silk department. While checking up on her sick Miss Varley finds a roll of silk is missing and looks under the counter to see if it is there. Thus the body is discovered. The young lady promptly faints.

Superintendent James Beck of Scotland Yard is called in, and finds the solving of the murder a difficult one. There does not appear to be any motive for the murder or any clues that would give a lead in tracing the crime. But Superintendent Beck proceeds in his usual thorough and painstaking manner to question all who may know anything about the case or give information about the murdered man. In the meantime business is being conducted "as usual" in the shop, after the floor-walker has roped off the Chinese silk department so that the police may be left free to study that department without interference.

"WAS HE LIKED?"

The Superintendent stroked his chin tenderly. The cool efficiency of the establishment impressed him. It was rather unexpected, but then being a policeman he could not be expected to know too much about modern business organization.

"I hear that Mr. Nolescue was a departmental manager. Can you tell me anything about him?"

The shop-walker looked the superintendent straight between the eyes.

"Not very much, sir. Mr. Nolescue was an expert in his line."

"And what was that line?"

"Chinese silk."

Beck stood, thoughtful. The shop-walker's manner, while apparently frank, gave him the impression that the

man had not been over fond of Nikolas Nolescue.

"Is it usual to have experts in every line you carry? You must pardon my ignorance, Mr.—?"

"Kearns, sir," he supplied readily. "As a matter of fact in the Chinese silk trade it sometimes takes an expert to detect the good from the bad."

"You mean imitations?"

"Hardly that, sir, but some Chinese firms import the cocoons from Germany, and spin the silk in China. That is not always considered first-class material, and often only an expert can detect it."

"Was Mr. Nolescue well liked?"

Mr. Kearns did not answer immediately.

"That would be difficult to say. There was nothing particularly offensive about him—except that he was a foreigner—Rumanian, I believe."

"There had been no complaint from any member of the staff—from the women for instance?"

"None so far as I know, but if you will excuse me, sir—," Mr. Kearns strode away in the direction of the main doorway where Beck saw a smartly-attired man in conversation with the commissaire.

In a moment the smartly-dressed man came forward.

"I'm Mr. Oxtan," he said, addressing Beck. "What's all this nonsense about a murder being committed in the store? They phoned me half an hour ago."

"I'm afraid there's not much nonsense about it," the Superintendent told him. "The body's still behind the counter if you'd care to see it, Mr. Oxtan."

Peter Oxtan regarded the serious grey eyes of the man who spoke. There was, he told himself, certainly going to be no nonsense about Superintendent Beck.

"Perhaps I'd better, although I don't particularly want to. You're quite sure it's murder? He couldn't have had a seizure or something?"

"He could, but he didn't," Mr. Oxtan intimated Beck as they moved in the direction of the Chinese counter. "Mr. Nolescue was strangled. Besides, people who just lie down and die suddenly don't usually wrap themselves around in rolls of silk."

Peter Oxtan gazed down at the lifeless form of his Chinese silks expert

with a worried frown.

"It's horrible," he announced, turning away abruptly. "You're not leaving him here, Superintendent?"

"The ambulance will be here in a few minutes and then we can get down to work. By the way, I will be looking to you for some help, Mr. Oxtan. This looks to me like being a case with one or two unusual features, and if you can discover the reason for this man being in the store late last night, I'll be obliged. It will help me to make a start. At the moment, I'll confess, I just don't know which way to turn."

"I'll certainly do that, Superintendent, and answer any other questions you may care to ask me. At the moment I can't think coherently. I'll be in my office when you're ready. Kearns will show you up."

Beck watched the managing director of Oxtan's walk toward the elevator, and once again he stroked his chin with just the same tenderness.

Ten minutes later the ambulance had taken away the body of Nikolas Nolescue, one-time silk expert at Oxtan's. The silks behind the Chinese counter had been removed to another part of the shop and the roll of silk in which the murderer had wrapped the body of his victim had gone to Scotland Yard as one of the exhibits in the case. More than that, Phyllis Varley, in the express instructions of Peter Oxtan, had been sent to her home despite that young lady's protestations that she had quite recovered from the shock of finding the body.

Superintendent Beck had had a further word with Doctor Akers before that gentleman's departure and gleaned the fact that, so far as the doctor could ascertain, death had taken place about 11 o'clock the previous night and that the act of strangulation had been carried out by someone with strong, capable hands, "Look at their hands, Mr. Meek," he had advised.

But at that moment Beck did not know whose hands were indicated although the policeman realized that Nolescue in life had been a powerful and well-built man and that it was likely that he had not thrown away his life without a struggle. Yet so far as he could gather, no signs of a struggle had been discovered. That was possible of course.

Wedding on Friday at South Porcupine

Miss Minerva Kathleen Bannerman, of Golden City, and Norris Lett, of South Porcupine, Married

South Porcupine, Ont., April 3rd, 1937. (Special to The Advance)—A very pretty wedding took place in the United Church here on Friday, April 3rd, Dr. Fraser officiating, when Minerva Kathleen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Bannerman, of Golden City, became the bride of Norris Lett, of South Porcupine.

The bride looked lovely as she came into church on her father's arm. She wore a beautiful bridal gown of white satin, cut on princess lines with up-standing Medici collar, and wore a veil caught to the head with a coronet of pearls. She carried a shower bouquet of Talsman roses.

Attending her as matron of honour was her sister (Edna) Mrs. E. Macz, who wore a graceful gown of pale green chiffon, with a picture hat of daffodil yellow, and who carried a bouquet of yellow roses. Mrs. Cullen, of North Bay, played the wedding music and Mr. Don Millar acted as best man for the bridegroom.

A crowded church of well-wishers attested to the popularity of this young couple, who will in future reside in South Porcupine.

After the ceremony the wedding party returned to the home of the bride's parents at Pottsville, where a wedding supper was served to the immediate relatives and friends of the bridal pair, in number about thirty.

Later in the evening a wonderful reception was held in the Finnish hall at Pottsville, at which nearly two hundred friends and neighbours were in attendance. Gifts of usefulness and beauty were brought for the newlyweds and fun and dancing was kept up till quite late.

We offer our congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Lett and wish them a long and happy life together.

Waterloo Chronicle.—It is gratifying to learn that several unions have ousted Communists from their ranks.

Ottawa Journal.—And now a Spanish General has gone and called Mussolini's legions in Spain "tin soldiers." It Duce will hardly bear up under that.

Englehart View on New Train Service

Latest Announcement on New T. & N. O. Time Table.

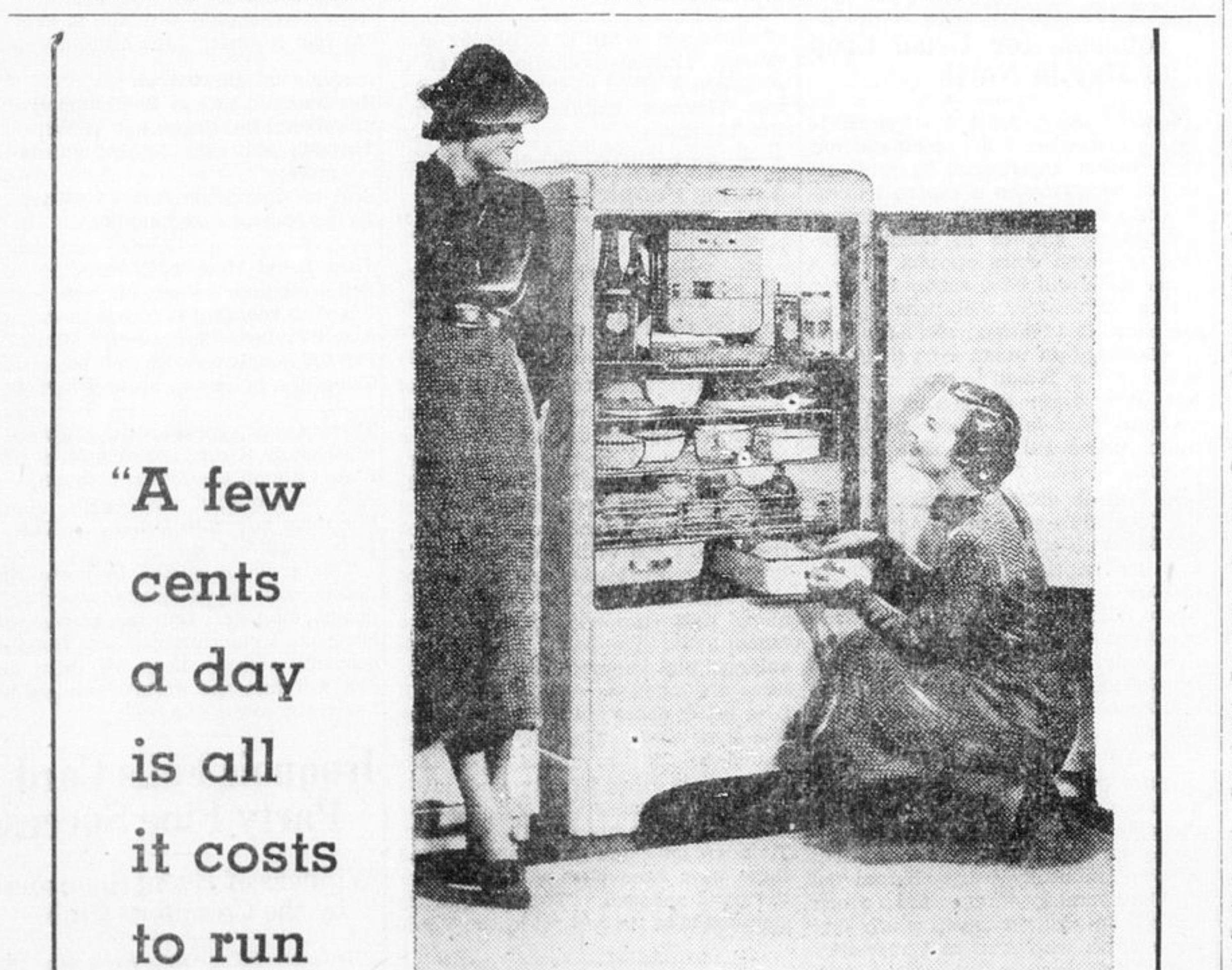
Englehart, April 5.—(Special to The Advance)—An extra train added to the present schedule on six of the seven days of the week, no disturbance of the local service now provided and two trains through to Toronto as recently announced, will be included in the new timetable to be issued by the T. & N. O. for April 25. The Advance learned over the week-end from sources here regarded as well-informed. Details will be made public later, but it is understood that in view of the numerous representations said to have been made to the management from different sources, the local trains, originally intended to be abolished, will be retained. They will operate on week-days between North Bay and Timmins, with the usual connections, and on Sundays between Timmins and Cobalt. The Advance was told.

The express service which was announced will be given, apparently on the hours mentioned from Toronto and Timmins and other northern centers, although it is stated that on Sundays the southbound train will leave Timmins at one o'clock, instead of some hours later as on week-days. Nos. 46 and 47, the present Toronto trains, will run daily except Sundays. This service will give two through trains each day to and from Toronto every day but one, with connections to Ottawa and Montreal with one of them, while passengers between local points on the road also will have the convenience of the local trains, enabling them to transact business in various northern centres and return home the same day.

Cobalt Relief Head Seized by the Throat

W. Chuckroski Goes to Jail for 30 Days on Failure to Pay Fine.

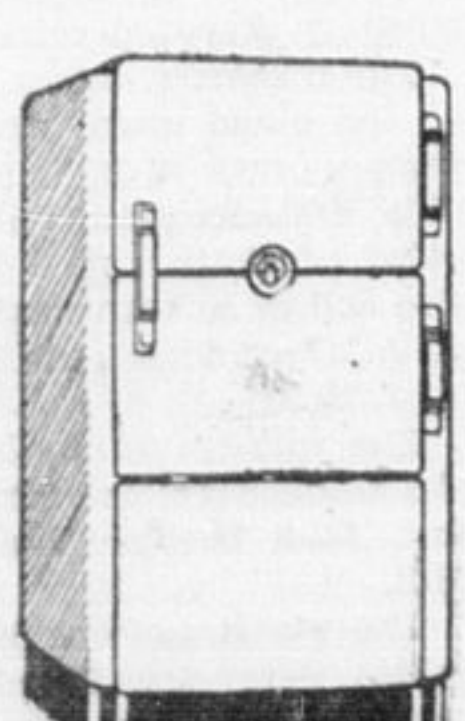
Halleybury, April 5.—(Special to The Advance)—Alleged to have seized Cobalt's relief officer by the throat when he was not satisfied, apparently, with the explanation given him regarding the removal of his name from the relief lists of that town, William Chuckroski is in the district jail here for the next 30 days, sentence imposed upon him on Saturday by Magistrate Atkinson on Saturday when accused pleaded guilty to a charge of assaulting Thomas Mulholland. Chuckroski could not meet the alternative of \$20 and costs. Accused came north last fall after being laid off from an airport near Kingston and he was given relief as a single man from December. Mulholland is said to have reported him to the municipal authorities for not turning out for work when called upon and council ordered his name struck off the lists. Chuckroski called on the officer for an explanation and subsequently is said to have put hands on Mulholland and to have backed him up against a council chamber wall. He then left, but was arrested next day by Chief of Police Miller on complaint of the officer.



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"He had been for many years in Szechow as an agent for one of the biggest firms in the Balkans."

Beck made a few unobtrusive notes.

"And how long had he been in London prior to your engaging him?"

"Two months, so he said. He'd been home to Rumania for a little while on holiday; had grown a trifle weary of the Chinese climate... did not suit his health, I believe he said... and was anxious to obtain a position in London."

"He would be an alien, I presume?"

Peter Oxtan nodded. "I believe he intended to take out naturalization papers. In fact he asked me whether, in a few months' time, I would be willing to sponsor him."

"His work here, Mr. Oxtan—of what precisely did it consist?"

"It's rather difficult to explain in non-technical language, but one of his duties was to see that our consignments of Chinese silk were up to specification and standard. That, Mr. Beck, is work for an expert. Although I have been in this business all my life there are times when I would not trust myself to form a definite opinion on certain classes of Chinese silk."

"You mean that some of them might be rather clever imitations?"

"Not exactly that. They are made in China all right, but not necessarily from the Chinese cocoons. It is possible that the cocoons were imported, and in some instances they do not provide quite the same quality silk. You and I, Mr. Beck, would probably say there was no difference, but we might be wrong. Mr. Nolescue, being an expert, could be certain."

"And is all this so very important to the buyers of Chinese silk?" asked Beck whose mind could not appreciate the niceties of distinction.

Peter Oxtan smiled. He could understand the purport of the superintendent's question. "It just comes to this, Mr. Beck: Oxtan's have for a century had a reputation for sound business. We cannot be too careful that our customers are supplied with the genuine article. I think you will appreciate that point."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Blairmore Enterprise.—A school girls' essay in a Montana paper read as follows: "When we go camping we must keep the place neat, we must be very careful to put out our fire. This is God's country. Don't burn it up and make it look like hell." A girl in the same class had been instructed to write an essay on winter. Her attempt read as follows: "In winter it is very cold. Many old people die in winter and many birds also go to a warmer climate."

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