



# THE SILK ENIGMA

BY  
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"ZORA, THE INVISIBLE,"

"DEATH IN THE STALLS," &c.

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### YOU CAN START THE STORY HERE

Only a couple of instalments of this interesting story have been published. You can start the story right now. If you read the synopsis you will have a clear idea of the story so far. Here is the synopsis up to date:—

#### Synopsis

**NIKOLAS NOLESUE**, a departmental silk manager at Oxons, a big London silk emporium, is discovered by **PHYLLIS VARLEY**, first assistant in the Chinese Silk Department, lying dead, his body wrapped in a roll of Chinese silk beneath her counter.

**SUPERINTENDENT JAMES BECK**, of Scotland Yard, finds that Nolesue has been strangled, but after interviewing **FETER OXTON**, the managing director, he discovers that the dead man had no apparent right on the premises the previous night, when death was adjudged to have taken place.

Believing that Miss Varley can supply the answers to a number of questions perplexing his mind, he sets out to interview the girl, who has been sent off duty after her gruesome experience.

#### (Now Read On)

**ONLY ONE FRIEND**  
Beck nodded. "Now what was Mr. Nolesue doing in the store last night?"  
"I can't tell you that, because I don't know. From the inquiries I have made there was no reason at all why he should have been so employed. No one on the staff seems to have any idea."

"He was on the premises contrary to regulations?"  
"I suppose you could put it that way."  
"When you appointed this man, Mr. Oxtou, was he given to understand that in his case certain departures from ordinary custom might be permitted? For instance, supposing he had to remain behind last night because he had not quite completed some task on which he was engaged when the store closed last night, would he have had to seek permission to remain behind to complete it?"

Peter Oxtou looked thoughtful. "I can't remember whether Nolesue was given such an instruction, Superintendent, but normally I can think of no work which would have detained him after the store closed at six-thirty."

"You have a watchman on duty at night?"  
"No! Not all night. There is a man who goes around to see that the place is locked up. He's the man on the door. He tells me that so far as he knows everyone was off the premises shortly after seven o'clock."

"And can he remember seeing Nolesue leaving?"  
"He cannot, but it is scarcely likely that he would pay particular attention to any one individual."

"Thanks," murmured Beck, "but since Nolesue was killed some time between the closing of the store and midnight, you must see that the affair presupposes the existence of a second party. I take it that there were no signs of entry having been gained during the night and that Nolesue would not have a key of his own?"

"None whatever, Mr. Beck. The whole affair's a complete mystery."

"You have no information regarding the dead man's popularity? His relations with other members of the staff?"  
"Again I have scant information. From what I can gather he was a quiet, unassuming little man of rather reserved temperament. The only thing I can gather, however, is that he appears to have been rather friendly with Miss Varley."

"He was her immediate superior in the store?" questioned Beck. "That being so he was likely to make contact with her more than with anyone else?"  
"Yes, I suppose he would. I have, of course, not had an opportunity to question Miss Varley."

Superintendent Beck pulled himself out of his chair and closed his notebook with a snap.

"Thanks a lot," Mr. Oxtou. I think I'd better hop along and see Miss Varley before her memory grows cold."

Peter Oxtou appeared just a little bit upset at the intimation.

"Do you think that's wise, Superintendent?"

Beck looked squarely at Oxtou.

"You mean that the girl is likely to be upset after this morning?"

"I was thinking of that. After all, Superintendent..."

"Oh, I won't be too hard on the girl, Mr. Oxtou. But we mustn't let ourselves grow too sentimental. We have

to remember that a man has been murdered... a man who seems to have been friendly only with Miss Varley. Miss Varley discovered his dead body, and I particularly want to know why Nolesue was murdered and by whom. That's my job and the taxpayers who contribute towards my stipend have a right to demand that I do my job as thoroughly as my limited powers will enable me to do. May I have Miss Varley's address?"

Peter Oxtou consulted the staff ledger and scribbled the information on a piece of paper.

"You don't think Miss Varley knows anything, Mr. Beck?"

"So soon as I've had a few words with her I'll be letting you know," smiled Beck.

When he had gone, Peter Oxtou stood for a moment staring at the door that had closed behind the Scotland Yard Superintendent. In his heart he hoped that Phyllis Varley knew nothing at all and yet... a murder on his premises was disturbing and what Beck said about "duty" was very true.

#### NOLESUE'S WORRIES

##### CHAPTER III

Phyllis Varley lived in a "combined" room in Moore Street, Chelsea. It was a pleasant room and her landlady was one of that mothering type for which many provincial parents with sons or daughters in London should be thankful. For Phyllis the accommodation was ample and comfortable and when the girl had arrived home before ten-thirty Mrs. Shapling had first raised an interrogative eyebrow and then unleashed an inquiring tongue.

"Is it murder, dear?" she inquired, as she proceeded to brew the girl a cup of strong tea and welcomed the excuse to have one herself.

"I don't rightly know," confessed Phyllis. "All I heard was that Mr. Nolesue was dead. Isn't it dreadful?"

Mrs. Shapling looked up from watching the kettle on the hob. "It must have been terrible for you, dearie, just to look down and there he was. Like the pictures, isn't it?"

Phyllis could not very well suppress a smile. She liked Mrs. Shapling. She was a sincere, honest and simple-hearted soul.

"It wasn't quite like that, Mrs. Shapling. I only saw his hand. I recognized that curious little twisted serpent ring he always wore on his small finger."

"Only saw his hand, dear! You don't mean to say they'd cut the poor gentleman up?"

"He was wrapped in a roll of my silk," explained the girl, "and only a hand and a little bit of his arm were sticking out. It was a bit gruesome."

"I should say it was. Must have given you a fair turn it must. Kettle's boiling—at last."

Phyllis felt better after Mrs. Shapling's strong brew.

"I didn't want to leave the shop at all," she explained, "but Mr. Oxtou sent down word that I wasn't to think of coming in again to-day."

"And quite right too," commented Mrs. Shapling. "I think he ought to send you down to Margate or Brighton for a week. All the same, it was decent of him. I suppose the police were called in?"

"So I was told. I didn't see any of them. I was in the staff-room. They did send a funny old doctor around to look at me."

"He'd be the one they have for telling 'em how long the body had been there," explained Mrs. Shapling, sagely. "I've read all about that."

"Yes, I suppose he was," murmured the girl, absently. "He told me to try and not think about it."

"That's right, dearie," agreed Mrs. Shapling, "you must forget all about it. I'd go for a walk through Hyde Park if I were you, or down Cheyne Walk to the river. It's nice down there even in October. By the way, dearie, was that Mr. Nolesue I saw you with in Sloane Square last week—that little man, with the hooked nose and a yellow complexion?"

Phyllis nodded. "I expect so. He was going into the City and decided that he'd walk along with me and get the train from Sloane Square."

"So no one knows who murdered the poor gentleman," mused the woman.

"No other cup of tea, dear? There's plenty in the pot, and I'll have to make fresh for Mr. Chamberlin after his luncheon. I suppose you didn't hear how

he died, did you? Was he shot or stabbed? I like 'em stabbed best. You know, short-handed dagger usually in the back."

"Please, Mrs. Shapling, Phyllis protested. "I really have no idea..."

"Sorry, my dear! My thought do run away with me at times. Perhaps you'd better have a lie down on the bed until after lunch."

But Phyllis Varley had not been resting for more than ten minutes before Mrs. Shapling announced "A gentleman to see you, my dear. He looks like the police," she added, darkly, "so for goodness sake be careful. I've had it said that they can make you say just what they want you to say. Shall I ask him to come in or do you want to tidy up a little first?"

"You can ask the gentleman in, Mrs. Shapling," she said, but not before she had taken her handbag from the bedside table and scrutinized her complexion.

"Good morning, Miss Varley. I'm Superintendent Beck from Scotland Yard. I'd like to have a little talk, if I may. Nothing serious, you know. Nothing to be afraid of."

"Sit down, Superintendent, if there's anything I can tell you I'm sure you'll find me only too willing to do that."

"That's fine, Miss Varley. Very nice little room you've got here! All on your own in London?"

"It is rather nice, isn't it? No, I'm not exactly on my own. My people live down at Aylesbury. They moved out of London two years ago on account of Daddy's health. I usually go down at the week-ends. It's too expensive to travel up and down every day—expensive and fatiguing after you've been on your feet most of the day."

Beck nodded his agreement. "Now about this affair this morning at Oxons. Feeling better now?"

"Once I came out of that stupid faint I was quite all right, but they insisted on sending me home. I'd be much better at work you know."

"Still, it was a nasty shock, wasn't it? By the way, Miss Varley I've an idea that you're going to help me tremendously over this case. You knew Mr. Nolesue better than most, didn't you?"

Phyllis Varley did not reply immediately to the Superintendent's question. While it had been asked simply and rather ingenuously, she felt that its interpretation was capable of more than one implication.

"I knew him as my immediate superior in the shop, if that is what you mean."

Superintendent Beck sat regarding the girl coiled up on her low divan-bed with puzzled eyes. He told himself that she was very beautiful and that his experience had taught him always to be on his guard when dealing with beautiful women.

"Was that the full extent of your association with this man, Miss Varley?" She looked the Superintendent straight between the eyes.

"Might I ask just precisely what do you mean by that question? It doesn't sound any too nice to me."

"Perhaps I've put it rather baldly," smiled Beck. "I assure you, Miss Varley that I am suggesting nothing more than my question implies. Mr. Nolesue had been employed at Oxons for four or five weeks. He was, I understand, in sole charge of the Chinese Silks Department. As such, you, as first assistant, must have had many conversations with him—more opportunities, I mean, than anyone else, and it is because I know so little of this man that I am compelled to invite you to help me in whatever way you can."

"Our conversations were mainly related to business, Mr. Beck. I think I only met the man half a dozen times outside the store, and there was a reason for that."

"My I inquire what that reason was?" "Certainly! Mr. Nolesue was a man with a very wide knowledge of silks—particularly Chinese silks. I know something about them myself. I attended a course of commercial lectures at South Kensington and became interested. I realized that Mr. Nolesue could tell me more about the manufacture and history of Chinese silk than perhaps anyone in England because he'd been in China and studied the subject at first hand. I always found him willing to answer my questions."

"Thank you, Miss Varley. I understand. But in the course of your pursuit of professional knowledge, Mr. Nolesue, no doubt, told you something about himself."

"As a matter of fact, he told me very little and I never pressed him on that point because I really wasn't interested. I gathered that he was a Rumanian by birth, that he had travelled extensively not only in Central Europe but also in the Far East. He mentioned that his reason for coming to London was that he wanted to settle down and he thought London would suit him better than anywhere else."

Beck was patently disappointed. "Can you think of any reason, Miss Varley, why Nolesue should have remained behind last night after the store

closed? Did he mention anything to you about it?"

"So far as I know there was no reason at all. I have been thinking over that and I don't understand it."  
"What time did you leave last night?"  
"The shop closed at 6.30 as usual and I was away from the premises by 6.45."  
"Did you see Nolesue?"

The girl shook her head. "I hadn't seen him at all since about four o'clock when he came to my counter to inquire whether I had delivery of a new consignment of silk from Szechow. I told him that it had not come down from the warehouse and that I doubted very much whether it had arrived."

"Did he appear particularly anxious about this consignment?"  
"No more than usual, I suppose. We had ample stocks to meet current requirements. Of course it was Mr. Nolesue's job to see that the staff which was sent was of the standard ordered."

"You don't think that Nolesue remained behind last night for the purpose of ascertaining whether this consignment had or had not arrived?"

The girl answered that she did not think so. "It was not as important as all that," she added. "Besides, Mr. Oxtou usually okay's any overtime, and if you've already see him and he doesn't know what Mr. Nolesue was doing, then I'm afraid I can't help you, Mr. Beck."

"Now about Nolesue's relations with the staff," persisted Beck. "Was he well liked, or can you call to mind anyone who had cause to dislike him?"

Beck was surprised to see the colour mount to the girl's pale cheeks, and he felt that for the first time during the interview he had asked a question that appeared to disconcert the level-headed Miss Varley.

"No, she answered, thoughtfully. "I can't. You see Mr. Nolesue had no occasion to interfere with the other departments so it was unlikely that he could arouse anyone's dislike."

"Yet a moment ago when I asked the question, Miss Varley, I noticed that you appeared embarrassed. Are you being quite frank with me?"

"I'm afraid I don't know what you mean, Mr. Beck."

"I was thinking of that rather attractive blush that came to your cheeks," said Beck, shamelessly. "It is within my experience that the modern young woman doesn't blush for nothing."

"Then I must be the exception," she told him, giving him as good as he gave. "You see Mr. Beck, I don't usually discuss matters like this with strangers. I might so easily give a totally wrong impression."

(To Be Continued)

**Kincardine Review:**—Old J.B.'s patience was never tried to the utmost limit. He didn't have to answer telephone calls when trying to get some urgent work done.

### Teeth Important in Health of a Nation

Noted English Dentist Urges Care of Teeth from Infancy.

"The health of a nation is largely dependent upon the nation's teeth," writes Dr. C. Payton Baly, an English dentist, in the current issue of "Oral Health."

"The teeth of a nation are largely dependent upon the national food," he continues. "Through our rates and taxes we are spending much money to provide dentistry for our school children, but alas, how often do these children start their school careers with septic mouths and neglected teeth."

"Many people are advocating extending the school age downward by the provision of nursery schools, so as to make school dentistry available to younger children," he continues. He notes that much is being done at welfare centres and schools for mothers by way of providing dentistry for toddlers.

"Our preventive public health work is far more advanced on the medical than on the dental side," Dr. Baly writes. "In the last forty years there has been a marked diminution in tuberculosis, typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever and scurvy-rickets, but diseases due to malnutrition are still far too rampant."

"Good water, air and light, better housing and better sanitary conditions for all expectant mothers, together with proper medical and dental supervision are the ideals that must be kept before us," the dental leader asserts.

"The dental profession can do much by paying more attention to preserving the teeth of the younger generation, and less to wholesale extraction and the manufacture of artificial teeth," he goes on.

"And the profession can help in an even more important direction, by encouraging parents in the right attitude toward the conservation of their children's teeth."

"Too many parents still cling to the old notion that milk teeth do not matter—that they can be left to decay and will come out all in good time. As the modern dentist realizes, the care of the milk teeth is just as important as the care of the permanent teeth."

"Dental inspection of the child should begin certainly not later than the age of two and a half years, and preferably earlier," Dr. Baly writes.

Literary Digest:—According to an Indian newspaper, a new way has been discovered to fill seats in vacant movie theatres. Twenty minutes after the show started in Bangalore, a monkey came through an open door, took a seat. Calmly he watched the film, and took his leave at the end.

Green tea at its best

# "SALADA" GREEN TEA

### March of This Year Exceptionally Fine

No Rain and Only a Little Snow Early in the Month.

Although a little colder than usual, March this year was exceptionally fine. There was no rain and only a very little snow early in the month. The Porcupine basked in 230 hours of sunshine, an average of 7 1/4 hours a day. For five consecutive days, from the 25th to 31st not a cloud dimmed the sunshine, giving a full 12 hours of bright sun each day.

One of the other remarkable features about March's weather was the almost entire absence of rain. The closest approach to rainfall was on the evening of the 18th when a sort of sleet fell, totalling a hundredth of an inch. Total snowfall, 16 inches, was a little lower than normal for March. Half of it came in light falls on 10 days of the month, while the other half came on the 6th, 7th and 8th.

#### Range Was 52 Degrees

Range of temperature for the month was 52 degrees, from 37 above zero on the 31st to 15 degrees below on the 10th.

The average temperature for the whole month, 12.8 degrees is lower than the average, although 1932 was slightly colder with an average of 12.3 degrees.

The average of the daily high temperatures for the month was 23 degrees; the average of daily "lows" 2.6 degrees.

The 9th and 10th were particularly cold days for March in the Porcupine. On the 9th the mercury failed to get above 4 degrees. The 10th was colder on the average, with a maximum of 7 degrees and a minimum of 15 below zero, giving a mean of 4 below.

Highest of the "low" temperatures was on the 19th when the early morning mark was 22.

At the beginning of April the sun rises at 5.40 a.m. and sets at 6.30 p.m. Lighting up time for vehicles is from 7.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The new moon that comes on April 11th is at the full on the 25th.

Ottawa Journal:—The mayor of Montreal demands more power. That puts him in tune with the times.

### Why They Call a Quarter of a Dollar "Two Bits"?

A lady reader of The Advance enquired last week as to why the slang expression for a quarter was "two bits" and that for a half dollar "four bits." She could not see why a "bit" should be 12 1/2 cents. The answer is that the term "bit" as applied to money means exactly what the lady thinks it shouldn't—twelve and a half cents—certainly an odd amount. Rev. E. Cobham Brewer, author of "Dictionary of Phrase and Fable," says that the word "bit," as applied to money, is used in the West Indies for a half pence (five pence). In Jamaica a "bit" is worth six pence. In America it is worth twelve and a half cents, while in Ireland its value is ten pence. The author proceeds to explain that the word is thieves' slang for money generally, and coiners are called bit-makers. "In English we use the word for a coin which is a fraction of a unit. Thus, a shilling being a unit, we have a six-penny bit." Rev. Mr. Brewer gives no suggestion or hint as to how the term originated, further than his reference to it being thieves' slang. In any event, however, it is certain that one bit is twelve and a half cents; four bits is half a dollar.

### Court Deals With Matter of Buried Treasure Found

(Wall Street Journal)  
Playing among the bushes of a vacant lot in Dorchester, Mass., three boys—John Lynch and Paul and Robert Boucher—dug up a metal box which contained 540 silver half dollars. They notified police, who took charge of the money. News of the find soon spread, and before night scores of persons, with shovels, spades and picks, were digging over the lot looking for "buried treasure." The next day, John Slavin appeared at the police court and claimed the treasure. He said he had buried \$270 in half dollars in the early days of the depression, fearing bank failure. Police refused to turn the box over to him, and Slavin went to court. When he produced the key that fitted the box the judge ordered the money returned to him on condition that he pay each of the three boys a reward of \$10.

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