

The Wade KIDNAP Case

By Leslie Cargill

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"Call it 'King's Evidence'." "A big bribe, eh?" "Suppose we call it a reward for turning King's Evidence." "Nothing doing, mister." Broome sighed. "I think you're making a mistake," he remarked. "If you knew The Chief you wouldn't think so. The cops don't scare me, but he does. Isn't there a saying about honour among thieves? That's us — sink or swim together. What's that behind?"

"Looks like a car and coming along pretty fast, too." An automatic appeared in the man's hand as if by magic, displayed menacingly against the wheel. "First bullet for you if there's any monkey business," he grated.

But the overtaking motor passed with a hoot and the whirl of tires.

The gunman was impressed. "Some bus!" he said enviously. "Wish we had one like it. This old tub was doing a steady sixty and he left us standing."

Broome was too disappointed to answer. Major Mosson would certainly not have hurried past like that had he managed to get hold of a sufficiently speedy car to take up the pursuit. Nor could it have been the police. All he could do was to wait and see what was intended of him. He had rather expected to be taken to the kidnapers' headquarters as he had been when accompanied by Felicite. But this hope was rapidly fading.

"Twenty-five thousand pounds," he murmured, reverting to the role of the tempter.

"Save your breath, mister. I could take it any time, and without spilling any beans." Was it imagination or were there signs of arousing cupidity?

"Not safely. Think how much better it would be as a free gift with no questions asked and protection against your bogey man."

"Couldn't be done." A slight hesitation pointed to distinct weakening.

"Would you take my word for it that Sir Timothy will withdraw from all proceedings against you. Remember he wants a safe return home. Money doesn't matter. As for Jones, a prison cell will keep him out of mischief."

"Come, aren't you tired of running round in circles?"

"That's your fault mostly. Once we expected to get the notes from the safe. Then we had you bring them to us. This time . . ."

"This time they are here, and so am I. And you are still afraid to dump me by the roadside and make off for fear the police chase will then begin in earnest. Right?"

"More or less."

"All that is necessary is for me to telephone Scotland Yard, after which you can go your way, a wealthy man, while . . ."

"Hold your tongue!"

Broome's arguments suddenly lost force. The change came at the mention of Scotland Yard. "Or," he continued persuasively, "I could carry on alone while you went into hiding."

"I thought you said I'd be safe from the police?" Once more he was taking an interest in the discussion.

"From the Chief, I meant," Broome said, ramming home his point. "Anyone of independent means has the whole world to roam in."

"Abroad, eh?"

"Why not?" At least until the coast is clear. Later you could return and settle down in England."

"Listen, mister, England hasn't done me much good, nor my mates, but I don't like playing the dirty."

"Kidnapping an old man and a young girl isn't very clean."

"That's different — business. The Chief and the rest of 'em and me are partners."

"In crime. Here is an ideal opportunity to get out of the racket, to put yourself in the right and set yourself up as a gentleman from now on."

Reaching down, he picked up the suitcase. "Look," he exclaimed with a nice sense of drama, "£25,000 in notes. All yours for the asking."

The man removed one hand from the wheel, snatched at the bag and pitched it into the unoccupied rear seat. "Wouldn't I be a sucker," he snarled. "Where would you come in as soon as I was on my way? Setting the cops for miles after me!"

"No. I'd keep on my own and settle with your old friends my way. Don't you understand that must be the case. We can't trust each other too far, but so long as I keep going in this car and you look after yourself we're both safeguarding our interests."

"Are we?"

"I think so. Have you a better plan?"

"Mister, by this time to-morrow I'll either be thirsting for your blood or blessing you."

"Then you agree?"

For answer the man drew up close to the grass verge. Switching on the roof light, he produced a road map and began to mark in pencil certain directions. "Here is the cove," he explained. "Somehow or other you'll have to get a boat. We had the only one in the district. This is the island."

"Pshaw! Askward to get at it!"

"I'll say it is. That's all I can tell you."

"Anybody else there but the prisoners and your three friends?"

"No, a soul — and they won't be friends of mine after this, not by long chalks. I'll get out at the next town. After that it's up to you."

to the outskirts of a busy urban area with the beginning of a tram track. "This'll suit me," announced the driver, preparing to hand over the controls.

"Better make sure you take the proper bag."

"Trust me!" There was the sound of clasps springing open, the brief rustle of crisp paper and a breathless chuckle. They parted without another word being spoken.

CHAPTER IX Mosson is Superseded

"The car was ordered by telegram, sir. Anything wrong?"

"As far as you're concerned I don't suppose there is a great deal to worry about," Major Mosson had no wish to alarm the manager of the private hire company.

"I'm not concerned about the car, sir. We're insured against most contingencies, and the client paid our driver a £50 deposit before taking over. Quite apart from business we dislike assisting people who are running foul of the police."

"A most laudable outlook Mr.—er—"

"Whetherby?"

"Mr. Whetherby. And you could not have been expected to act otherwise."

"Thank you. Naturally our man made sure the driving papers were in order. Third-party cover is provided for in our fees."

"Quite so. Did you keep the telegram?"

"Certainly!" Mr. Whetherby produced it from a file. It had been sent from Bedford, no doubt after being thrown from the train with sufficient money to ensure dispatch.

"What a lot of Smiths there are in this world," Mosson chuckled. "Ever done business with this one before?"

Without comment the manager opened a large ledger and pointed to the index.

"It would be difficult to tell," Major Mosson agreed. "Sometimes it pays to be among a flock of sheep. Our latest John Smith may be any one of the score or more on your books."

"Afraid I don't know them all by sight, sir. Many of our clients are casuals. We can ask Smith if he'd seen the other Smith before."

"Pshaw, I shall get tangled up at this rate!"

"The staff driver, sir, Horace Smith, this time. A most intelligent chap."

In this Mr. Whetherby spoke truly. Horace had taken careful notice of the clergyman and was able to report the affix "Rev." before his name on the license.

"The gentleman with him was carrying a suitcase which I took to be brand new," he added. "We didn't dawdle over the job and they were away in a brace of shakes."

"Seen either of them before?"

"Never, sir. Quite sure. I don't forget a face easy. None of our regulars."

"Any idea how he would know where to get in touch with you?"

"We advertise pretty well. Time-tables, notices in stations, and on some of the main line trains."

The major did not pursue this point further. It was the sort of emergency the racketeer would provide for. That he could produce the very considerable deposit in ready money was one more instance of the constant state of preparedness.

When Bellair Broome drove away with "the Rev. John Smith," Major Mosson had been placed in a quandary. Since Assistant Commissioner Caythers had thrown him on his own initiative he hesitated to raise a hue and cry again. For a time it really had appeared as though they were being led slowly but surely to the latest haunt of the kidnapers. Then the bait had been swallowed whole, and he was left cursing the mixture of bad luck and superior strategy of the opposition which had gone against the police from the commencement of the case.

Tracking down the car hire company had taken some time, though he had been fortunate in finding a taxi-driver who had seen the clergyman take over and recognized the service motor car. In the same taxi he had essayed a futile chase which ended abruptly at a baffling traffic roundabout.

Over the telephone he had heard from headquarters some strongly expressed opinions.

Continuing the scolding in the more convenient surroundings of his own room, Captain Caythers lamented the intrusion of legal experts into the realm of purely police work and spoke regretfully of opportunities which Cranley and Tredegar would not have wasted.

"It seems I'm returning to my department for good," Mosson said.

"First, I want a minute by minute report of all the happenings," replied Caythers.

In this Major Mosson was on firmer ground. He had the trained legal aptitude for documentation and set the facts out in orderly procession.

"An excellent resume," Caythers approved. "After which we come to the exhibits in the case."

"Exhibits?"

"Letters from the kidnapers. Don't tell me you've mislaid them because—"

"All right, all right!" Mosson said hastily. "Here they are, minus only the official red tape."

The assistant commissioner scanned them attentively. "This is rather interesting," he observed, setting aside that communication which bore the ostensibly authentic postmark.

"Yes, I thought so. It is the one the chauffeur handed to Broome after get-

ting the wrong side of the postman. My opinion is that another address has been written on a used envelope after the original words had been removed."

"Why didn't you bring it in sooner?"

"I didn't think it important. We knew they were faking the postmarks."

"The date is significant. Hadn't you noticed it is eight months old?"

"So it seems, though it isn't very clear."

"Plain enough to me. Who opened the envelope?"

"Broome."

"So you didn't observe its condition?"

"Not at the time."

"When you did was it very much crumpled?"

"It was a trifle grubby."

"Splendid! Here's where Dilling does his good deed for the day." He broke off to summon the laboratory expert, a gaunt individual with chemical-stained hands, who promised to distil every scrap of information the envelope had to give in under an hour.

Somewhere in Scotland Major Mosson was engaged in uncongenial departmental tasks for the remainder of the day and halfway through the following morning. The entrance of Captain Caythers provided a welcome relief.

Pushing away a bulky dossier relating to the borderline activities of a scheming financier, the major grinned hopefully.

"Thought you might care to have a glance at Dilling's report."

"What's he say?"

"Quite a lot. Cutting out the technical stuff about paper, ink and such like, we come to the meat. As I suggested, the sealed envelope may have come from outside the ring, but I hope not."

"Me too. Where do we go from here?"

"Cranley and Tredegar go to Scotland while you get on with neglected work."

"Have a heart."

Caythers had really intended to let Major Mosson be in at what he believed to be the approaching end of the case though he was no longer permitted to play an individual part. The two C.I.D. men who had been investigating the Marsh Hollow Manor end were detailed to accompany him. Cranley, a jovial Londoner, was rather a social asset, but the habitual gloom of the Cornish Tredegar somewhat offset this. Both of them, however, were trusted officers with high standing at Scotland Yard.

Strangely enough Tredegar got along far better with the Scottish authorities who must have sensed a Celtic blood affinity.

"Afraid I'm obtuse, but the import-

ance of the discovery escapes me." "I was thinking of a small boat—the sort of craft on which you can't avoid a good drenching every now and again." "As an example of forensic science this interesting conclusion wouldn't carry much weight," Mosson observed. "Yet beneath the sang-froid I detect signs of subdued excitement. In plain English there's something up your sleeve."

"Oban."

"Sounds like Russian to me and I haven't even a nodding acquaintance with the language."

"Oban happens to be a town on the west coast of Scotland, in Argyllshire, to be precise. Thanks to Dilling we have been able to get beneath the top address on the envelope. They happened to fade the original writing with a chemical compound. After treatment in the laboratory and submission to X-rays we know that it was first sent to Mr. Felix Scrandon, Cnoc Dearg, Croisrig street, Oban. They're fond of the Gaelic up there. Cnoc Dearg I take to be the name of the house. From the peak near Lake Treig."

"Never heard of them, or Mr. Scrandon."

"Well, you have now. And the name is a genuine stroke of luck. Up to now we've been harassed by aliases. This strikes me as genuine."

"Providing the letter was sent to one of the Smith, Jones or Robinson crowd!"

"Exactly. I'm banking on it, mainly because it appears to date back to about the time they were making plans for kidnaping, or rather before. As you say the envelope may have come from outside the ring, but I hope not."

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At Cnoc Dearg, a gloomy stone house on the outskirts of the straggling town, they drew blank. It had been vacated four months previously.

Upon the detectives devolved the wearisome task of building up the identity of Mr. Felix Scrandon, until it became positive he was the same person as Mr. Jones of Marsh Hollow Manor. While remaining a mysterious figure he was not quite so nebulous when Cranley and Tredegar began to draw aside the veil.

Five years is not a long time when it comes to obtaining a footing in a dour Highland community, especially when a newcomer makes little effort to establish friendly feelings. Neighbours knew little about the occupants of Cnoc Dearg except that they were all Sassenachs.

Rumours had drifted around that their business associations were not entirely honest, though this had never gone beyond the whispered stage. For weeks the house would be closed, and the comings and goings naturally awakened local curiosity. It was not as if the residence was in the more thickly populated districts. On the edge of the town where there were fewer topics of neighbourly comment so unusual a household was bound to be noticed.

"Fourrr men, look you, and na' a lassie tae helw w' the work," they were told.

There was a Dr. McBrid who added a stronger colouring to the picture, for he had once been called in professionally. "Twas a long gash in the forearm of the one they called Valentine," he said. "Being a Glasgow man I can tell a knife wound when I see one. Falling on a broken bottle doesn't cut so straight and deep, as I made na' ado about the patient." But he had never found out the real truth.

Scrandon was "Mr. Jones," Valentine the grey-haired man with bushy brows, Croombe the fair one with light grey eyes, and Willis the chauffeur. These names were presumably genuine.

Mosson was fascinated with the way his colleagues pieced together the fragmentary scraps by patient observation unexpected interviews and a quality that was akin to intuition.

(To be Continued)

The characters in this story are entirely imaginary. No reference is intended to any living person or to any public or private company.

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Thomas Richard Henry's Resolutions for New Year

Just at this time when the proverbial New Year resolutions are being broken and forgotten for another year, it is interesting and amusing for the average Tom, Dick and Harry to read Thomas Richard Henry's New Year resolutions for this year, as set forth in The Toronto Telegram.

New Year Resolutions

To us Christmas is a great day, but New Year is just the day we take down the old calendar and put up a new one. This year, being war year and all, we have promised to make some New Year's resolutions, since it has been impressed upon us that there are plenty of resolutions that we could make which would be appreciated by others if not by us.

We will resolve the following:

We will not smoke in 1940; except when we are alone or in company.

We will pay all bills promptly; except when we need the money for something else.

We will accept no remuneration from any magazine for the stories that they reject.

We will call none of our petunias "Stalin," even if the seed catalogue says they are red and they turn out to be imperial blue.

We will not get up in the morning the same day that we went to bed; unless it seems a good idea at the time.

We will sit up with sick friends only as long as we are winning.

We will pick no quarrels with Joe Louis.

We will always go first in a bowling game; except when we lose the toss.

We will not pot hunt; except in the evening and on Saturdays and holidays.

We will never go fishing on Sunday

Sudbury Firemen Rescue Boy Locked in Bathroom

Sudbury firemen one day last week had a call where there wasn't any fire. It was a case of a lad of five years old who had locked the bathroom door on the inside and "disposed of the key the way little boys sometimes do," as the despatches phrased it. The little lad made the customary noise when he discovered he couldn't get out of the bathroom, and his mother found she could not get in. The mother called the fire brigade and before breaking down the door, the firemen used ladders to reach the bathroom window. One of the firemen got in through the window, was able to rescue the key, and release the boy.

when we are in the city, and never buy cigars on Sunday when we are in the country.

We will never say unkind things about the upper "classes" except when they provide the opportunity.

We will criticize no politician whom the job has sought; only those who have sought the job.

We will play no professional hockey.

We will not accept any big government jobs, or become a wing commander; unless the government asks us.

We will not disagree with our wife between sundown Sunday and moon-rise Monday.

We will give up trying to make our son pay more attention to what he wears and trying to make our daughter pay less attention to what she wears.

We will never exceed the speed limit; unless we are in a hurry.

We will be polite to all insurance underwriters; unless they start trying to sell us insurance.

We will break none of the resolutions; unless it is very necessary.

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