HE TRANSGRESSION

By Horace Hazeltine

Congright, 1910, by the New York Herald Co. All rights reserved.) N the eyes of his community Crommelin was such a man as you are, or as I am, or as is that worthy neighbor of ours, whom we have known so long for a just and conscientions citizen. One would as soon have suspected the parish priest as have suspected Crommelia. And no one knew this better than did Crommelin himself? It was this knowledge indeed that had eventually decided him. It was this assurance that had made for him transgression pos-

He Stood Transformed.

sible, min Though the gestatory period had been prolonged the temptation had been born full grown and virile; yet of such strangely unaccustomed visage as to shock and affright him. Contemplation, however, and the familiarity thus engendered, had tended, after a little, If, not to make comely, at least to soften the forbidding features of his impulse, and so, by degrees, in spite of a lingering repulsion, he reached the stage of determination. He would rob Ellery Stephenson?

Enwrapped by the deep shadows of his little vine girt plazza, he sat alone. The warm midsummer night was still and breathless. The unrippled river Which stretched in shallow breadth before his door was like a great slab of polished purple porphyry, reflecting the pale fight of stars. Now and again on the black valance of the privet hedge or amid the blacker plumes of the cedars Breflies fitfully flickered.

To his left beyond the bedge's border, in massive . chosen to make his summer home. gray sliboucite against the night sky, blotting out a share of its lamps, rose the ostentatious summer long and intently with the quickened interest of the my desk. Indeed, it's very rarely that I haven't sever-

of all ordinary conceptions of the outlaw. He was one evening, as, walking in his garden beyond the the dining room to the right, and that its windows when it tightened again, so flercely that it required feeble, tottering props of his courage broke and neither brawny nor agile. He had passed his forty- privet hedge, he chatted with a guest from town. overlooked his own premises. 11fth year post, with hair thinning and paling into a They had suggested nothing to Crommelin then exfitting frame for high, intellectual brow, grave, near cept to bestow an added emphasis upon the term

for her father as an animate reminder-usy, as an actually about to perform.

rest was due Crommelin blamed Stephenson, who to permit the exit of his own body, and closed and had flaunted his wealth until comparisons had become latched it on the imprisoned collie. Passing to the humilisting contrasts. He blamed ulm, too, for the rear of the tool house, he took the path through the advanced assessment on the Crommelin property-a garden, cut diagonally across his withered strawreflection of his own improved real estate-bringing berry beds, and, finding a gap in the privet hedge, with it an increase in taxation beyond reach of limited squeezed through it into the Stephenson grounds. resources. And the exigency of the moment was a delinquent tax bill and a scant four days in which to save the Crommelin homestead from the auction

Planning the Deed.

From behind him within the house the rasping whir of a clock announcing its intention to tell the time broke harshly luto the silence, and Crommelin started guiltily, with every nerve a-tingle, and straightened abruptly, with lean hands clutching hard on the arms of his chair. But, as in a quick succession of strokes the hour of midnight was signalled, he smiled grimly behind the masking dark, commanded his resolution, stood up, and with a deep breath lifted his small, indecisive chin and squared his narrow, drooping shoulders.

Another moment and he stepped from the plazza not tell whether the sash was up or down, to the gravelled walk and thence to the lawn and moved away under the cedars, a shadow beneath shadows, coming eventually abreast of the privet hedge. Here he gained a closer, less interrupted view gloom. What if those discerning eyes should pick his of the near side of the Stephenson dwelling and saw it dark from roof to plinth. Creeping along the fringe of turf that divided the grounds from the sandy river report and he should drop dead or too wounded to beach, bugging the gloom of the arching foliage, he stagger away, and so be discovered and his family his goal, columned front showed no glimmer of light. At the He stood a long while looking up at that Window. With infinite caution he had proceeded thus far, close cropped, rolled turf of the tennis court to the me. He didn't get anything at my place, though.

side of the house came blankly into view.

trance, and as he had yet to make certain prepara- next door neighbor, had passed blift; by without so wick filled acridly his nostrile. A lighted lamp had of the master. tions for his adventure, he excluded it from his pre- much as a nod, as though he were not worth his no- been permitted to die out-unnoted. Possibly the per-Hminary survey. That the house slept he entertained tice; the occasions, too, when his wife had daughter

bis return, and was climbing the gentle slope of his pretender, with head high and shoulders back, strut- and went shiveringly cold at his reward. Clearly there own weed grown lawn, relieved almost to ease, when ting his garden paths, folling in one or another of his suddenly the shock of the unexpected checked him motor cars, driving his thoroughbred trotter to a against him was his own Scotch collie, and as, still of the man's history as gassips had dropped them; trembling, he whisperingly commanded the dog to that he had been an errand boy, a counter hopper, a exclamation; sprang up and stumbled toward him stience he congratulated himself that the incident floor walker, and had finally made a fortune in the through the dark. There was the sudden shock of the had occurred when and where it had. He would provide against repetition by locking Shep in the tool

The tool house was at the back, on the edge of the garden, and thither he gropingly made his way, with the dog at his heels. Now that his fright was over the animal's presence heartened him. But the squalor of the place, dimly illuminated by a lantern, inflicted a fresh wound of discontent. The tools were few and old. Some of them were broken and useless. He centhed the too profess a disabled lawn mower. The scythe, its fractured blade red With rust, stabbed his or water the orievance. -

From a jumble of dusty sacking, old carpet and worn out clothes in one corner he extracted a suft of faded, frayed and stained overalis, and after removing his coat and waistcoat put it on. Then adding a limp and rusty hat that had once been black, and pulling it low on Mis grizzled head, he stood transformed. From a piece of the sacking he cut a mask with two perforations to serve as eye holes and affixed bits of twine at the side to tie back of his head. Laying this for the moment at one side, he proceeded to rip from an ancient overcoat the lower half of a capacious sleeve, in which, in turn, he made a three-sided incision. When the sleeve section was drawn down over his lantern, effectually darkening it, the incision became a flap to be lifted at will and so shed light in any desired directiona rude imitation of the old style dark lantern.

The Masked Man.

These preliminaries completed. Crommelin adjusted his mask, with something of a qualm. It seemed to him the very sign and symbol of the outlawry in which he was about to engage. For just a moment his heart threatened to fail him. He considered postponement. In the four days remaining something might happen to make his crime unnecessary. A miracle might be wrought in the shape of a client with a liberal retaining fee. And then he remembered that to-morrow and on the nights following his opportunity would be less favorable. To-morrow his wife and daughter would return. To-night, save for the presence of the old colored serving woman, who went to bed early and slept soundly, he was at home alone. If he were to act at all it must be now. He had no right to trust to accident, to remote possibilities.

Stephenson, moreover, deserved a lesson. No man was justified in parading his riches before the unfortunate and then tempting them by leaving his back door habitually unlocked and his treasures unguarded. And this was what Ellery Stephenson had been doing. It had become a habit of his, indeed, to boast of the honesty of the community in which he had

"No one thinks of locking their doors down here," he had repeated again and again. "I never think of home of his victim; and Crommelin, tenning forward locking mine, and many a time I have had a thouin his scarred and rickety porch chair, regarded it sand dollars and more in cash in the top drawer of

al hundred dollars there. In appearance, as in character, he was the reverse 'Cromellin had heard him use those very words. Stephenson dignified as his "study" lay just beyond sighted eyes and gentle, kindly, inefficient mouth. "pompous braggart," which long before he had found Against the tide of adversity he had ever made but reason to apply to his ostentations and unsociable feeble buffet. In a small town, humbly peopled, he neighbor. Others in the village had heard Mr. had found his profession of the law wofully unre- Stephenson express himself in much the same maninginerative; and so life had been a continual pulling ner. Some regarded it a compliment. The less conat ends which never quite met. He was himself scientious considered it a reflection on their coarage burred to self-denial. His own needs were small. If not on their sagacity; and there had been threats His wife, too, was content with a miserable little. But made, which Crommelin, though he believed them his daughter was neither content nor considerate, idle or jocose, had nevertheless reprehended. And The sum of her petitions was exceeded only by the now, that which then had seemed to him too insum of her desires. And thus she had come to stand iquitous to speak of, even in jest, he was himself

animate rebuke-of his inadequacy. Hastily, with a distinct effort of will, he took up his For the changed conditions to which his child's un- muffled lantern, opened the door just wide enough

The Lively Imagination.

There was here a little grove of young plum trees, which formed a convenient shield for his approach to the back of the house. Nevertheless he moved timorously, with rapidly bearing beart. His project had now become instant, and that which in theory had appeared simple and easy, began to loom big with danger and possible failure.

On the edge of the grove he paused and ran his gaze up and down the high, gray wall of the sleeping dwelling. The windows were, without exception, dark. From all but one the red and white awnings had been raised. This one was on the second floor, directly above the trellised kitchen porch, and the lowered awning so obscured it that Crommelin could

In his nervous trepidation he could fancy Stephenson, himself sleepless because of the heat, sitting beside this rear seaward window watching through the figure out of the black? What if, as he crawled up the three porch steps, a revolver should flash in quick

dedged stealthly from shrub to shrub, until the third and drew back in excess of fear. But after a time collision with furniture; pausing each second with fallon of the left this ring bis reason prevalled. He chid himself for coward- alert ear to carch the slightest warning sound. And There remained now only the rear to be inspaced, lee. He recalled once again the urgency of his need, be came to a full halt; arrested not by sight or hearbut as he had determined on this as his point of en- He reviewed the occasions on which this man, his ing, but by smell. The reck of a smoking kerosene that the house had been aroused by the encounter, Mr. James Crommelin, wasn't it?"

had been as rudely ignored by the felminine Stephen-Skulkingly, with unrelaxed caution, he had effected sons. He called up a mental picture of the portly melin strained his hearing for that which he dreaded;

was still present. Fearing to breathe, lest he betray himself, Crom-

In craven panic his impulse was for flight, but his in gasping affright. The next instant he was made runabout or gulding his thirty foot steel launch over faithfess nerves denied him. His limbs were poweraware that the object which had brushed roughly the river waters. He gathered together all the crumbs less. From his limp fingers his lantern slipped with precipitating disaster. The sleeper awoke with an

premiums to the gulling of poor people.

The arraignment acted upon Crommelin and his cowardice as a counter irritant. It reawakened his _ indignation; it aroused his retaliation; it forced him bugging the other, wrestlers without science or skill, boldly forward to his reprisals. He forgot the lowered awning and all that it might hide. Briskly he crossed the tennis court, swiftly he passed beneath the grape arbor, and unfalteringly, but with careful effort at quiet, mounted the three steps to the trel-

The arrangement of the lower floors was moderately familiar to him. Several times during the winter, while the mansion was untenanted, he had accepted the invitation of the caretaker to take a look through. He knew, therefore, that the room which

instant only to get his bearings, he passed from kitchen to butler's pantry, gained in turn the dining knew; how he circled the dining table; how he gained a hand reaching out to lift him. room, skirted on tiptoe the great round mahogany the butler's pantry and the kitchen beyond. His wits

mail order business by mixing poor soap with poor impact; and Crommelin, all at once desperately alive to his danger, clutched wildly with the instinct of self preservation at the bulky figure which pressed so heavily, so overbearingly, against him.

For a moment the two swayed back and forth, each enveloped by the rayless black. If his adversary possessed the advantage of weight, Crommelin's compensation was in his stockinged, shoeless feet, which, gripping the waxed floor, preserved his equilibrium. The other slipped and slid, now this way, now that, unable to throw, unable to force back. So contending they moved in a circle, each panting for breath, each striving for the suprenfe instant.

Then suddenly a chair was overturned, and simultaneously Crommelin was dragged forward by his ponderous antagonist, who, losing his balance, toppled backward. In a mad effort to save himself the the had left behind him, like the "hares" in a paper man whom Crommelin was sure must be Stephen- chase, the marks of his trait. son gripped hard on his arms. Then abraptly that grip relaxed, slackened, and, as he drew frantically away, ran lingeringly until it reached his hands, the opened telegram in his shaking fingers, the last effort to shake it off. With which he heard the body crumbled, and he fell prey to an overwhelmingly drop heavily, jarringly, to the floor; heard the re- poignant anguish of spirit. It was not only that he Having found the kitchen door not merely un- sounding, horrid blow of the head upon wood, and locked but wide open, he paused a moment to remove turned away dazed, sickened, yet with the impulse of subconsciously dominant.

How he found the door in the dark he never quite

by the scuffling, the overturned chair, the heavy fall

A Tormented Mind.

He expected to see lights, to hear cries of alarm; but the darkness and silence still prevailed, unpenetrated and unmarred. And at this be was selzed, with a fresh torment, as memory echoed again that resounding thud of skull against unyielding floor. What came to him the soft murmur of a long, deep-drawn if Stephenson should have been killed by the necident! Refore God the responsibility would be his. Could be hope for immunity from man's discovery? They would trace him, perhaps, by his shoes, The half sleeve about the dantern would be fitted to victors note of alarm to the bare floor at his feet, the other half in the old overcoat in the tool house. Therefore he must hide the overcoat or bury it. .He must, too, blot out his shoe prints in the soft soil of the strawberry beds. And both of these precautions must be taken at once.

He hastened forward, harassed, hysterically astir with impatience. Irritably he snatched off his mask, which must be disposed of, teo. - Perspiration was pouring from every pore of his face and neck, but it went unheeded. He squeezed roughly through the gap in the hedge and started across the garden, on his toes. Half way to the tool house the frantic half bark, half cry of the imprisoned coille arrested him with a new apprehension. He knew that excited canine note too well to mistake its meaning. There was some one within the grounds besides himself. Swift as he fancied he had been, his suspecting pursuers had been swifter. They had headed him of, They had found him absent, which would be almost

equal to conviction in itself. Agitatedly he began to divest himself of his overalls. To be discovered so clad at such an hour would lend added weight to the other circumstances. The jacket of faded jean lay now among the withered strawberry vines, and he had started to remove the breeches, when, suddenly, the white of his socks, showing pale against the dark, proved to him the idleness of his attempted deception. The combination of these socks, with the discarded shoes, which must eventually be discovered, was too damningly condemnatory to be gainsaid. And so, once more, he stood, quakingly inert, peering through the sombrous night for a glimpse of the moving shadows which he knew must be there. And all the while the dog's distressed whining bark continued without cessation. Discretion bade bim dissemble, and obediently he

dropped to his knees, determined to lose himself in the dark of the garden patch by lying prone upon the soil. But once more the unforeseen perversely betrayed him; for one knee, coming in contact with the keen edge of a forgotten hoe, wrung from him against his will a little cry of pain as be sprang back to the

At the same moment a man's figure emerged from the dimness of the lane, less than a dozen yards away, and a voice rang out in question:-

"That, you, Mr. Crommelin?" Denialin the circumstances, he realized, was useless. Hiding was now out of the question. With a tremer he commanded his voice.

"Yes," he answered. "What do you want?" "Jot a telegram for you," the voice flung back. "Couldn't find a soul about the house; but seeing your door was open thought you must be near by.'

The Telegram.

Crommelin, partly reassured, joined the messenger "Telegram!" be exclaimed. "Telegram at this time of night?" Instantly his thought was of his absent wife and daughter, his own danger for the time forgotten. The man who had brought it he recognized and he told him he might sign his own book. It was

too dark for him to see to write. "All right," was the reply. "I'll make a guess at

the time. Must be about twelve thirty ain't it?" Crommelin, striding off in his anxious haste to ascertain the contents of the little envelope in his hand, was scarcely conscious of either remark or question; but later both recurred to him in all their grint significance, as fixing the moment at which he was met coming from the direction of the scene of the assault. A lawyer himself, he realized fully the importance of such evidence. What a fool he had been to fancy that because of a past blameless record, a past bonorable and unquestioned standing, suspicion's finger would be turned aside! It was as if some cunning and malignant Nemesis had first tempted him and then trapped him. At every turning

In his little, plainly furnished sitting room, alone now with his threatened safety, his jeoparded liberty, had tried and failed, not only that he had yielded to temptation to meet the inevitable disgrace, but that it his shoes, and then, with the lantern flap lifted for an flight and the avid craving for safety, for security, had now, at the very instant of his undoing, been proved unnecessary.

For the message which had so alarmed him had been

"Consin James died suddenly this afternoon," 15 read. "They say you are his principal legatee." Cousin James! He was worth a bundred thousand if he was worth a cent. Poor Cousin James, who prided himself so much on his family! Ah, well! He would be spared knowledge of his kinsman's degradation. Why, it was he who had given him the seal ring with the Crommelin arms. The seal ring which

he wore on-The Missing Ring.

And there his musing abruptly turned again; for, extending his little finger for reverential view of the gift, Crommelin saw that the ring which he had work habitually for a score of years was gone. And then, in a flash, he remembered the slipping, sliding hand which had run from sleeve to wrist, and from wrist to fingers; and from which he had finally jerked himself free, with a torture for that very finger joint.

He rose to his feet and began pacing the worn carpet. What could be delaying them? he asked himself. Back and forth he walked with bowed head until he grew leg weary. Then he sat down again and waited. The hours dragged their slow trains of minutes; and still he waited-waited-con-

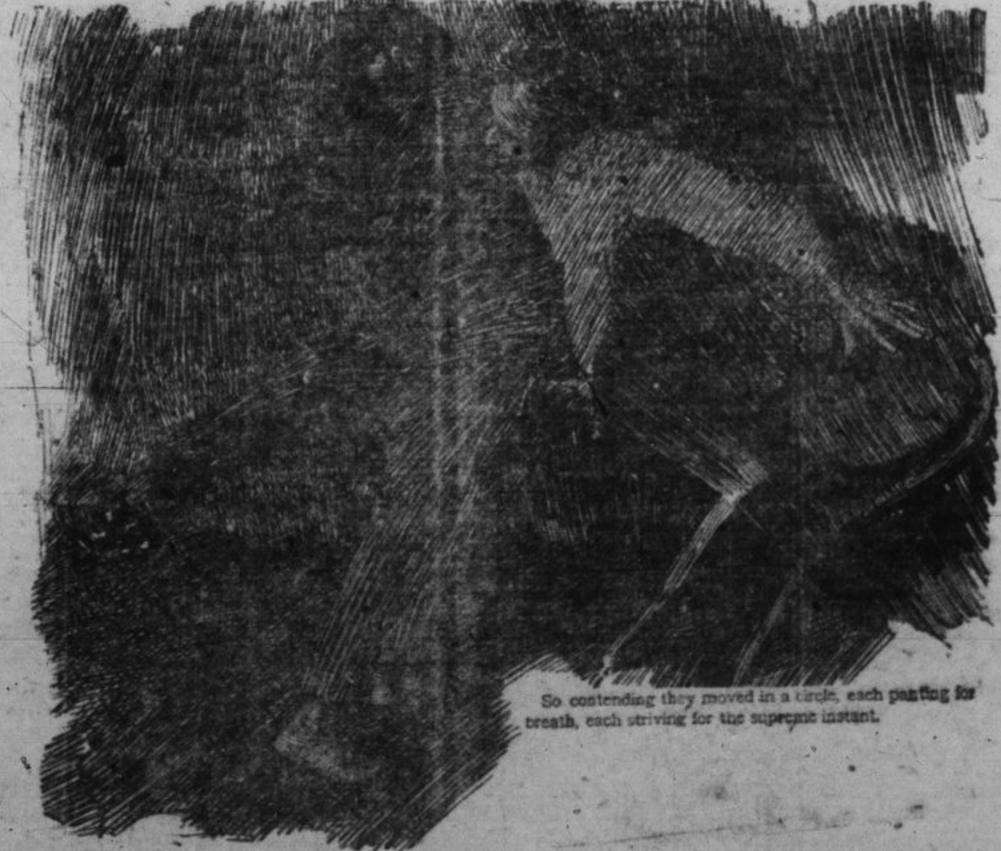
The dawn, painting gray his window panes, found him waiting yet, white eyed. The sun burned through the glass in flames from the crimsoned east,

and, sleepless, he tarried. When the clock struck eight he went into the dining room and sat at table, but he did not eat. As he sat

there the knock sounded on the door-the knock be had waited for so long. He rose as one joyed over a suspense ended, passed

glong the narrow hall, turned the key and then the knob, and flung the door wide. He was still in his shirt sleeves, still in his white stockinged feet. But what he saw made him think he had fallen asleep and dreamed. Ellery Stephenson, fresh shaven, smartly garbed, stood before bim, smiling, it

seemed to him, a little embarrassedly. "I hope I haven't disturbed you, Mr. Crommelin," he began. "You'll pardon my calling at such an hour, but I'm off for town on the 8:20 train, and I wantedindeed, I felt I must see you before I went. You see, I've never attempted to intrude upon you before. That's my way. I realize my own shortcomings. I'm a self-made man, and-well, I know how it is with you old family people who count ancestry above vulgar money. I couldn't help feeling I'd rather you'd able, with its encircling chairs, and reached at length returned to order, really, only when he was out speak first. So, as I say, I've kept to my side of the again under the starry sky in the still air of the fence. But it seems there was a thief around here He paused here to look back. He had small doubt Families' which I think a relative of yours compiled.



summer night, running in stockinged feet across the last night who robbed you first and then tried it on sanctuary of the little grove of young plum trees, his surprised him. We had a little scuffle, and this is