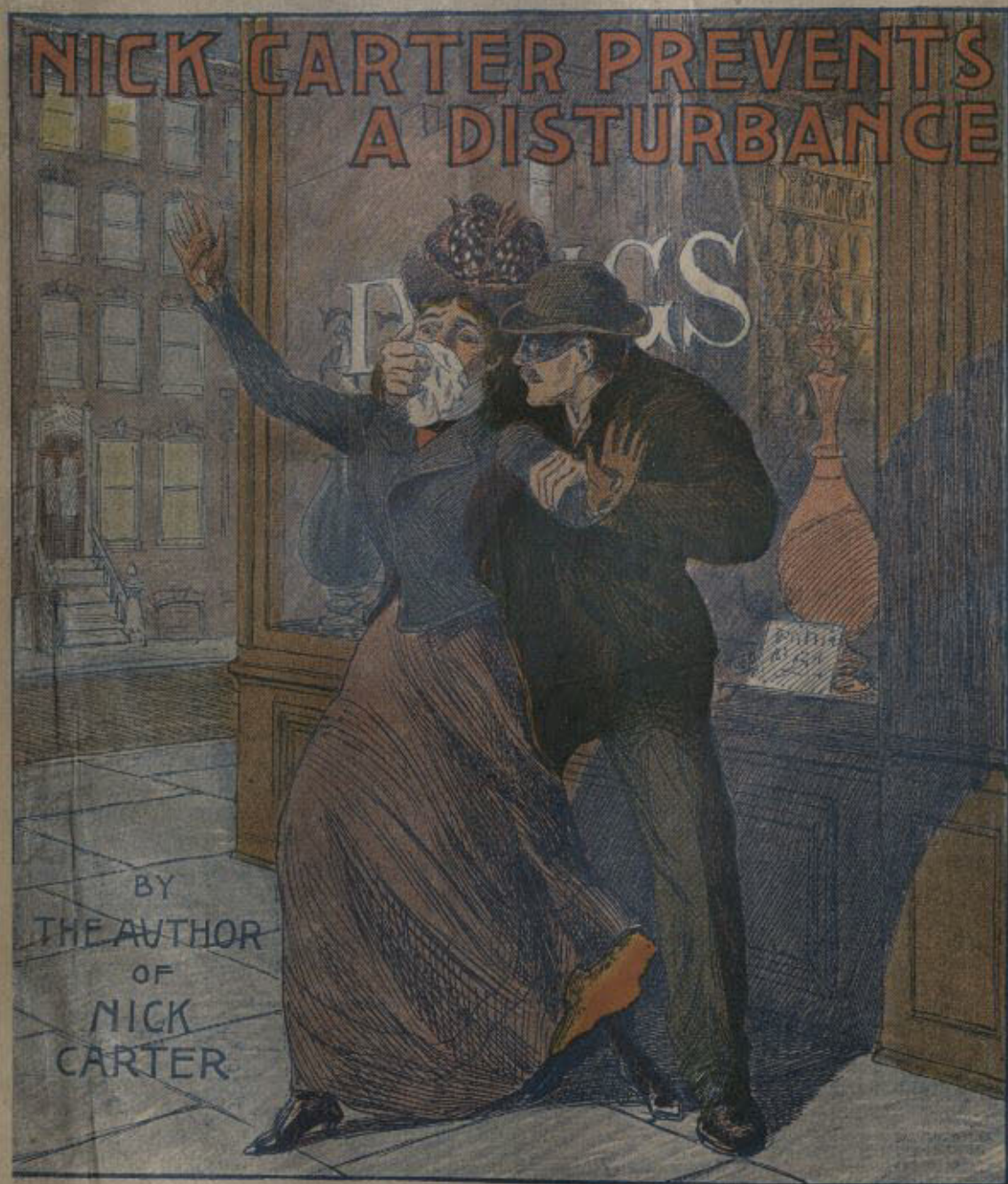


# NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued weekly. Subscription price \$2.50 per year. Entered as second class matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

No. 166.

Price 5 Cents.



A MUFFLED SHRIEK RANG UPON THE MIDNIGHT AIR.

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Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1906 by Street & Smith, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress,  
Washington, D. C.  
Entered as second class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office.      March 5, 1906.  
Issued weekly.      Subscription price, \$2.50 per year.

No 166      STREET & SMITH, Publishers.      NEW YORK.      238 William St., N. Y.      5 Cents

## Nick Carter Prevents a Disturbance AND LOSES A DISGUISE

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

### CHAPTER I.

#### SUICIDE OR MURDER?

"Suicide!"

"Murder?"

In the gray light of a new day, New York awoke to a thrilling sensation.

Its discovery had been announced by a woman's scream—the frenzied, uncontrollable utterance of a waiting-maid, frightened out of her wits.

One of the most elegant modern apartment houses in New York City—located in the vicinity of Central Park—was the scene of the commotion and the tragedy.

The ground floor of this sumptuous structure was divided into four suites.

Its luxuriously appointed hall answered as an outer reception apartment for all of these suites.

It was the duty of the maid in question to see that the same was set to rights with earliest dawn, each day.

On the special morning designated she had proceeded about her work in accordance with the ordinary routine.

Turning out the single light that burned near the glittering bevel-glass vestibule doors, she had plunged the rear end of the hall into deep shadow.

As she advanced into its partial gloom something unusual enchaind her attention.

An obstacle, a barrier never there before—a forbidding, dangling object, that was weird and soul-curdling—shocked her to a sudden standstill.

Then, half seeing, hardly believing, vague confusion, mingled with horror, drove her back to the extinguished jet.

With trembling fingers the maid relighted this, outshining the dim daylight that had crept in.

Again she looked—but she did not approach.

One glance, and a frightful scream parted

her lips as she sank to the softly carpeted floor like a corpse.

It was the echoes of this shriek and the heavy thud of the lifeless form that startled the house.

Within five minutes a group, pale-faced, hastily-dressed, huddled about the centre of the hall.

Its agitated members surrounded the unconscious servant, but they had eyes alone for the shadowy gloom of the distant part of the hallway.

There, dangling, they saw what the maid had seen.

The sight froze the warmest currents of the most timid, as of the staunchest heart.

Into that exclusive residence of elegance and refinement had come a grewsome horror.

It would have a stain, a memory, that would mark it like a plague spot, a haunted, eerie edifice, for half a generation to come.

The suite designated as "D" had, it seemed, been guarded through the silent hours of the night by a grim and extraordinary sentinel.

Over its carved, oaken entrance door was a stout electric-lamp bracket of antique black iron.

Around this ran a chain.

From the chain there hung a rope of the diameter usually employed by hangmen.

At the end of this rope a human being was suspended.

With terrified looks, the spectators shrank, discussing in quick, excited whispers.

"Suicide!"

This was the first essay toward conjecture.

"Murder?"

It was a bare insinuation, but the suggestion deepened general interest.

One spectator, more brave than the average, finally advanced toward the dangling figure.

Moment by moment this person's nerve grew stronger.

Step by step he completed an examination of the suspended figure, and made those surface discoveries which usually lead to a speedy torrent of revelation.

A sense of responsibility made this individual serious and urgent as he returned to the agitated group.

"Dead?" came a gasp in unison.

"Stone dead!"

"Murder?"

"I do not know."

"Suicide?"

"Probably; dead for hours."

"A man?"

"An old man."

"What shall we do?"

The investigator assumed the initiative in what occurred to him as primarily necessary.

The first thing was to remove the neglected maid to where she could receive attention.

The next was to send to the nearest police station.

Then, like electric waves from a central outlet, there was swiftly disseminated the intelligence that thrilled a whole community.

Crystalized into news form for the public, all New York soon learned of the tragedy of the hour.

Investigated by the police, rumor, speculation, theory, were based on ostensible facts within sixty minutes after the arrival of the first officer.

By ten o'clock the last reminder of the grim tragedy had been removed from the building.

Its aristocratic inmates had time now to indulge in sentiments other than those which had been influenced by horror.

They severely criticised the victim who had chosen that select centre for his sensational demise.

This emotion turned to indignation and positive wrath as they discussed the occupant—or rather the recent occupant—of Suite D.

The dead man had been identified as one, Enoch Marston, a well-known, respectable citizen of long standing.

The rooms before which he was found had been occupied by a woman known in the apartment house as Madame Cyrille Monterey.

She figured as the widow of a prominent official of the Brazilian War Department awaiting in New York City the arrival of friends who were to join her in a European tour.

This person had lived in the apartment house for about a month.

She simply made it her resting place, however, for she was so rarely at home that her nearest neighbor boasted only of an occasional glimpse of the richly dressed and always veiled, mysterious tenant.

There was but one theory to go on:

Impelled by love, the victim had haunted her quarters.

He had been seen in this vicinity several times a day for nearly a week previous to the tragedy.

In despair, with the motive of a cynical revenge, he had hung himself at the threshold of the apartments of the woman who had encouraged and then rejected his advances.

For her full share of reprobation, therefore, the woman came in.

She was a beautiful, designing siren, who had lured an infatuated fool to his destruction.

This was the way the gossips put it.

But to his ruin, first.

For the noon extras then gave a postscript to the earlier news of the day.

It had been discovered that Enoch Marston was a defaulter in the enormous sum of one and a half million of dollars.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Nick Carter?"

"Yes."

"Wait for twenty minutes."

"Who is it?"

"Police Headquarters—and—important!"

"How important?"

"The Marston case."

The celebrated detective had just returned from a professional visit to Boston.

Nick was removing his hat and gloves when the telephone call came.

He did not learn the identity of the person at the other end of the wire.

Hurry and excitement were manifested in message and sender, as he could trace.

So Nick sat down to patiently await the expiration of the time prescribed.

In less than a quarter of an hour a captain of police was ushered into his presence.

He represented one of the uptown stations; which one, the detective speedily surmised from the mention of the Marston affair.

The officer showed the utmost deference, and in a decidedly anxious way, as he was courteously greeted by Nick.

"I heard you were away," he explained; "glad to have caught you."

"What is wanted, captain?" inquired Nick.

"I told you."

"The Marston case?"

"Yes—you know about it?"

Nick placed his hand on the papers he had bought and read on the train.

"I know what they tell," he explained.

"'Noon extra,'" murmured the officer, with a glance at the newspaper headings.

"Yes, that gives the points pretty clearly."

"Suicide, then?"

"It looked so—then."

"And how does it look—now?"

"No different—so far as the evidence goes. But a person has appeared who disputes the apparently proven facts."

"You say that as though your earlier convictions were somewhat shaken," suggested Nick.

"I admit it."

"It was not suicide?"

"You must decide that, Mr. Carter. If it was a suicide, there is nothing more to do in the matter—it stands clear and solid on apparently established facts."

"And if—murder?"

"Then, Mr. Carter, it is a case so deep, so mysterious, that I know of no man in existence capable of even discovering the merest wedge of a starting point for that theory unless it be yourself."

"Thanks," nodded Nick carelessly. "You spoke of a person appearing who has brought about in you this change of opinion?"

"She has—I will confess."

"She?"

"Yes—it is a woman."

"And her interest in the affair?" asked Nick.

"She is the daughter of the dead man."

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE DARK.

"Tell your story," directed Nick Carter briskly.

The police captain went rapidly over the facts.

The victim, Enoch Marston, had resided in Brooklyn, in an old house he had owned for thirty years.

"His family?" asked Nick.

"One child—a daughter."

"And her name?"

"Violet. Enoch Marston's business was hardly specific; he was variously classified as an agent, a broker."

"But this million and a half?"

"That is represented by some trust property. As the trustee, he has been employed, and quite lucratively, for over five years past."

"Go on," said Nick.

"There were minor heirs, and the property

was left by a friend who trusted Marston as a brother."

"Now, as to the crime?"

"Why, the conjecture based on apparent facts is that Marston entered the apartment house after midnight."

"He was familiar with the place?"

"He has been seen about it as many as ten times in the past week."

"The woman, of course, was the attraction?"

"For her he asked, for her he waited."

"Then he visited her?"

"Oh, yes—several times."

"They were friendly?"

"The door opened—the door closed. Curious neighbors saw little, heard nothing."

"They simply assume that he was infatuated by this handsome Cyrille?"

"Yes, judging from Marston's ardent devotion in the way of dancing attendance on her. If he committed suicide, he came prepared. An overturned stool lay near the door. He could easily have attached the rope to the chain."

"The hook was strong?"

"It would sustain a safe. He could have placed the rope through the chain, then around his throat, kick away the stool, and——"

"Strangle."

"Yes—we decided on suicide, and we took the body home. Of course the daughter was crushed. I feel sorry for her; she is a lovely, innocent creature of about seventeen."

The police officer spoke feelingly; he was very much in earnest.

"When the young lady had recovered from her horror," he resumed, "she wished us to place the body in her father's office-room, as she called it."

"And why?"

"This room is more secluded. The house attracted many curious spectators, of course,

and more than the average number of prying busybodies."

"You acceded to her wish?"

"She had difficulty in finding its key. When we entered we beheld a scene of frightful confusion. The safe stood open, the floor was littered with papers. She seemed to know something of her father's business, for the discovery paralyzed her in a new way."

"Please explain," requested Nick Carter.

"The open safe, the littered floor, suggested robbery. Marston kept all the trust securities in that apartment."

"And they were gone?"

"All—every document."

"The girl saw that?"

"Fainting, horrified. I looked over a few account books. It seemed to be the oft repeated idiocy of an old man lured and fascinated; the defection in securities is over a million and a half."

"Did you investigate that phase?"

"With his brokers."

"They had none of the securities?"

"Not for months."

"And his banker?"

"Had a balance to his credit of less than fourteen dollars."

"A clean sweep!"

"Wholesale. I went away and returned an hour ago. The girl was white as a sheet, but calm as ice. She had heard the public story—had read the printed accounts."

"What did she say?"

"Coldly as a lawyer, she demanded that 'the infamous reports' be denied. She did not believe that Mr. Marston had any save purely business relations with the woman she had never heard of before."

"This Madame Cyrille Monterey?"

"Yes. As to the embezzlement, she would not even discuss it."

"Stanch in her confidence as to her father's probity?"

"Firm in that assurance."

"How does she explain matters?"

"She does not explain them—but she demands."

"Demands?"

"That is the word; she demands that the department suspend judgment of the case until from end to end its hidden details are known."

Nick nodded thoughtfully.

"Proceed," he urged.

"I have no more to tell. The young lady's earnestness interested me. I told her that she should have the services of the department. I came to you. I hope, Mr. Carter, you will go to see Miss Marston."

"Certainly."

"If she is wrong, you know how to undeceive her gently; if she is right, you will find it out without delay."

"Yes, I will find it out," assured Nick. "I think I have all the necessary details—no, the most important."

"What is that?"

"The woman."

"Madame Cyrille?"

"Certainly."

"Why, she has—retired."

"What do you mean by 'retired'?" inquired Nick.

"Just this—suicide or murder, she had no hand in the affair of last night, or this morning, whenever the tragedy may have occurred."

"Ah! you are sure of that?"

"She has furnished proofs."

"What proofs?"

"An alibi. She left her apartments at eight o'clock last night."

"Did you seek proof of that?"

"Oh, yes—people about the house saw her depart in a carriage."

"And when did she return?"

"She did not return at all. At eleven o'clock

this morning the owner of the building received a note from Madame Cyrille Monterey, informing him that, though blameless of any responsibility in regard to the tragedy that had darkened his doors—in fact, possessing no knowledge of it except what she had gleaned from the published accounts—she did not feel that she could longer occupy the rooms.”

“She gave them up?”

“Sending him the key, and rent up to the expiration of the six months’ lease.”

“Does she own the furniture?”

“Yes, and she directed the landlord to deliver the same to a truckman, who would remove it late this evening or early to-morrow morning.”

“Did you see the note?”

“I was there when it was delivered.”

“And the messenger?”

“He was a young fellow, who readily consented to take me to Madame Monterey.”

“And you went?”

“At once, of course. Her statement was clear, candid, convincing. She seemed really shocked; she had read the details of the tragedy in a paper as she was returning home.”

“Returning home? At what time?”

“At ten o’clock this morning.”

“She keeps that kind of hours?”

“She is just that kind of a lady, as you will see from what I am about to state. I found Madame Cyrille Monterey in that famous gambling palace of the Tenderloin, the ‘Paris Mutual.’”

This was a gilded gambling hall frequented by the fast set of society.

Actresses, women with a mania for speculating, slumming faddists, were its principal habitués.

It was a resort in vogue with late diners seeking an hour of diversion at chance games, and the stakes were usually high enough to

exclude any save those having an abundance of means.

Its patrons were of the well-dressed grade, and a hotel adjunct was exclusive, almost aristocratic.

Nick was already possessed of these details, so he asked no enlightenment on that score.

The detective invited his informant to continue.

“The lady was there,” narrated the captain, “haggard, and really distressed looking, watching some lady friends engaged at baccarat. She at once granted me an interview.”

“Showing you her credentials?”

“She did.”

“Brazilian ones?”

“Yes. I assure you, Mr. Carter, the woman may be a mere adventuress, but I think she owns that name.”

“What did she say about her connection with Marston?”

“She claimed that they were mere acquaintances.”

“Indeed?”

“And that he had business with her.”

“What kind of business?”

“She was thinking of investing in a piece of property which he controlled.”

“On the eve of her departure with friends for Europe?”

The captain shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

“And concerning which, he, a man representing millions, ran after her like a huckster eager to dispose of a second-hand garment!”

“I am simply giving her story,” apologetically remarked the officer.

“That is right—but her statements do not hitch with the facts.”

“I half fancied that. Well, she explained everything; asked me to spare her any annoying inquest experience that could only bring her notoriety, and told a perfectly straight story as to her intentions.”

## CHAPTER III.

VIOLET.

Miss Violet Marston entered Nick’s presence, a frail, but lovely-faced girl, not yet eighteen.

The detective needed only a single glance to realize that here was the true sufferer of the tragedy of the apartment house.

She was sad, depressed, exhausted. Nick therefore mingled consideration with policy.

“The captain of police has told me of your convictions,” Nick said, briefly. “I am here to prove your father other than a suicide and an embezzler——”

“Thank you—thank you!”

“If it can be done.”

“You may not prove it,” said the girl, slowly, “but I shall always know that he was true and honest.”

“I would like to ask you a few questions,” declared Nick.

“Certainly, sir. You are kind—you wish to spare my weakness,” observed the girl with a quick look, “but I am strong, believe me. There is but one object in life for me now.”

“I understand, and I will make it mine, professionally and personally,” assured Nick. “Take courage—provide me with all the facts possible that you think point towards a crime against your dead parent.”

“I have no facts. I have only faith,” said the young girl. “It is asserted that he committed suicide. Why should he, and—there!”

“Miss Marston,” said Nick, “let us face matters squarely. Your father, as I understand it, controlled a large sum in securities.”

“Yes.”

“He kept them in the office-room in this house.”

“It had been his custom for years.”

“And they are gone?”

“All of them.”

“You are sure of this?”

“At least, they are not about the house.”

“What are her intentions—as stated?” inquired Nick.

“She is going to take new quarters there, she says.” And the captain handed Nick a card bearing a written name and address.

“If we need her,” concluded the official, “she will come at once; but this notoriety will hurt her, she says, and she has adopted that new name.”

“Her new name, I perceive, is Mrs. E. E. Cole. Very well, I will look up the matter,” said Nick.

“One last thing, Mr. Carter,” spoke the captain, as Nick arose. “I asked the lady as to her idea of the tragedy, and she said it was the work of an enemy.”

“An enemy?—what enemy?”

“She would not state.”

“Could she state?”

“She did not say. She admits leading a gay, butterfly life—but harmless. But she is handsome, and confessed to knowing it. She has many suitors.”

“One of these did the deed?”

“Out of revenge.”

“She does not think that Marston committed suicide?”

“No, because she can find no possible motive for the deed.”

This staggered Nick a trifle. He admitted that it was a puzzling complication, with a party practically under suspicion steering the investigation so that it would point to murder.

“I will remember all this,” he observed. “Now, for this Miss Violet Marston.”

“I have a cab—let me drop you there.”

“Very well.”

Thirty minutes later Nick was admitted to the Brooklyn home so disrupted by grief and mystery.

"May he not have deposited them elsewhere?"

"The police captain says not; he has investigated. I was amazed when I found the key to his room."

"You had to search for the key?—why was that?"

"I have not been in that room for over two weeks."

"Why were you excluded?"

"I cannot tell you that."

"Was it always so?"

"Oh, no, sir—and the realization of this distresses me. It was nearly a fortnight since, when my father, whom I always helped in his accounts, began the custom of locking himself in that room, and locking it up after he left it."

"Which was unusual, you say?"

"It was unprecedented!"

"How did he explain it?"

"I did not ask him for an explanation."

"But it must have puzzled and disturbed you?"

"It did, coupled as it was with a change in the habits of years."

"You must explain that."

"He would leave the house at all hours of the morning, afternoon, and even in the evening."

"Which had not been his custom?"

"Never."

"Where did he go?"

"I do not know."

"Yes," corrected Nick, "we know—now."

"How, sir?"

"He went to see this Madame Cyrille Monterey."

"They tell me so," she murmured, her lips trembling, "but why should he?"

"I have not seen the lady in question yet," observed Nick, "but I am inclined to regard her as a dangerous, fascinating woman."

"No beauty or charms could affect a man

living solely in the memory of an angel wife only lately deceased; his love for me was his only other emotion!"

"Then what is the secret of her power to keep him waiting on her leisure—which she positively did—for hours, for days?"

"I cannot tell," said the girl, drearily.

Nick had simply been endeavoring to test her real sentiments; it had only demonstrated her unvarying confidence in her father's entire probity.

"Let me look," he suggested next, rising.

The girl arose also, and she asked in a quick, shaking breath:

"You wish to see—him?"

"If you please."

"He lies in that room."

She pointed—her lips quivering with agitation.

"And that is the room he used for his office business?"

The girl bowed assentingly. Nick entered the room alone.

He closed the door after him; it would only distress the daughter, and impede his own investigation to have her present.

In a good deal of wonder Nick took in the apartment.

That swift, lightning glance took in many things.

He looked over the large safe; exterior, interior, behind it, under it, the detective interestedly explored.

Nick studied its lock, closed the door, opened it, applied his magnifying glass; went next to the window.

He opened this and glanced out. He made a dozen tours of the room.

Scraps of paper, scattered documents, even the dust on the account books came in for careful inspection.

Then, last, the detective drew back the cloth from the face of the dead. The rope was still around the neck, but with its end

shoved out of view within the coat. All this was scanned with critical, patient care.

Nick Carter found himself considerably astonished, but as he entered the outer room he made no explanation to its saddened occupant.

Altogether he had been nearly half an hour in the office apartment, and every sixty seconds chronicled a discovery important or suggestive.

Nick was not greatly surprised that the girl had observed nothing more than an open safe and empty desks.

Her grief, her agony, were blinding; he could find reason for her lack of perception.

It was somewhat stunning to Nick, however, to comprehend that a police captain, even in a cursory scan, had not discovered in the disorder of the apartment a bristling arsenal of facts—facts—facts!

Miss Marston arose, with no change in her colorless face, as Nick re-entered her presence.

"Have you anything to say, sir?" she murmured.

"Why—yes," answered Nick. "I would advise that you exclude all curious sight-seers."

"Surely, sir!"

"And postpone the funeral for at least two days."

"I would prefer that."

"In the meantime—in fact, at once—I wish to consult an associate."

Miss Marston bowed rather hopelessly; there was no encouragement in Nick's words or manner.

But the detective was a great-hearted man. Rarely did Nick Carter take a step backward or alter a fixed determination.

That woeful face appealed to him so strongly, however, that he could not be cruel, even where candor was sanctioned by discovered facts.

Nick came back to the young woman, and he pressed her hand gently.

"Miss Marston," he said reassuringly, "I must give you my professional confidence—only I hope you will respect it."

"I do not understand."

"I wish to spare you even an hour's suspense. I have something to tell you."

"You have something to tell me!" she fluttered, and her heart seemed choking her.

"As the result of the first step in my investigation, I can assure you of one fact."

"Tell me—tell me what you mean!"

"Your father is not an embezzler."

So naive, so ingenuous was the girl's retort, that Nick, while slightly disappointed, felt a reward for his confidence.

"But I knew that, sir! I told you that—you remember."

"You did. Very well, you know it—I know it. But, my dear Miss Marston, the trouble is to make the world know it also."

"Oh! yes, sir—do not think me ungrateful or insensible! That is it—to make the world know also—my sole duty! my life's one object! But—how?"

"Well," assured Nick Carter, "I think I have found a way to do it."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A BRISK INVALID.

The "associate" whom Nick Carter wished to "consult" was Chick.

The detective, after leaving the Marston home, dropped a flying message to that gifted assistant.

Nick himself lost no time in getting to a point where, logically, in order to handle matters without a flaw, he should have been at the time of the weird daylight discovery—the apartment house.

Nick traversed all the ground gone over by the police captain.

He questioned the waiting-maid, one or two of the occupants of the suites on the same floor where the tragedy had occurred, and critically examined the door and the hook which had played a part in the tragic affair. His credentials from Police Headquarters made the landlord a willing servant to Nick. He handed over without question the key that Madame Cyrille Monterey had returned that morning.

Next Nick entered the abandoned luxurious suite, alone.

He had been in possession not more than twenty minutes when Chick arrived.

The detective was seated, speculatively taking in the exquisite appointments of the place.

"Sit down," invited Nick.

"Work here?" asked his assistant.

"No—the work is done here," answered Nick.

"I see," nodded Chick, as he noted his superior's lack of present employment. "Nothing turned up?"

"Nothing, either compromising or enlightening in those," said Nick, taking in a sweeping glance an escretoire and a dressing case. "The work is ahead of us, Chick."

"Much?"

"I think you express it."

"Hard?"

"It is going to be uphill at the start—very."

Then he explained the details of the case as he had heard them from the police captain.

"And allow me to add," he continued, "what I personally have found out."

"Ah! we come to the promising part," declared Chick with enthusiasm.

"Let me see, Chick, this is the seventh day of the month?"

"The seventh."

"Then, on the twenty-fourth of last month Marston's office was robbed. The place was burglarized, the safe forced, the desks ransacked. I am secure in claiming that on the

morning of the twenty-fifth, when Marston entered his house office, he was shocked, startled, appalled to find that during the night hours the place had been divested of something like one and a half million of dollars in securities."

Chick indulged in a low, expressive whistle. Then he asked tersely:

"This occurred on the twenty-fourth, you say?"

"No other day."

"Of course you have a definite pointer as to that?"

"Certainly I have—I am going to explain. Behind the safe, between it and the wall, lay a fancy calendar, a glass-faced affair."

"I think I understand."

"I did when I fished it out—shattered and dust-covered. There the burglar had accidentally pushed it. Marston was a remarkably methodical man. The last day he set it was the day of the burglary."

"And as to the burglar?"

"Jimmy marks on the window, unmistakable scratches and bruises on the safe door. The dials were removed, a pneumatic drill run to the jamb. Then, the clutch and clamp process."

"Slipping the locks?"

"Far enough to slide the door open. Some patching up was done to cover tracks. That is the layout."

Chick accepted it; Nick Carter's word was law and gospel in matters professional.

"From that date," pursued the detective, "Marston, according to his daughter's story, insisted on excluding her from the office, and began a variation of the methodical close confinement of years."

"Why this latter?"

"Perhaps he was looking for the stolen securities. This woman, Madame Cyrille Monterey, was a go-between, a negotiator?"

"That will fit a certain theory. But why did he hang himself?"

"Chick," said Nick, "Marston did not commit suicide. I have examined the chain, the rope, the hook, and they tell that whoever suspended the rope had soot-grimed hands—that is plainly evident; and yet Marston's were perfectly white and clean. Again, the rope was secured to the chain, and was too long. It was shortened by the tying of a knot. That knot is a telltale. No one but a person used to ropes all his life—an expert, in fact—could have tied that knot. The body was suspended as much as two hours after life had left it."

"Hah!"

"There are no marks of violence on the body; there is no indication of poison. Marston died a sudden; but a perfectly natural death."

"You tell this——"

"From indisputable exterior signs, which show as well a double transfusion of blood."

"Explain that, will you?"

"This far—let the coroner's jury make it plainer. Where the rope rested the flesh shows coagulation of blood. The circulation was stationary at the time, and the damming up of the arteries is local only at the point where the rope pressed."

"So Marston is not an embezzler?"

"He was robbed."

"Nor a suicide?"

"He was carried to this building and hung from that hook after death."

"The motive?"

"I do not know."

"Does the woman?"

"You have hit the right nail, Chick. We must find out! The police captain gave me her new address, and I am going there at once—you remain here. This evening or tomorrow morning she is to send for her furniture."

"She says so."

"Oh! I think she will."

"I shall see that it is delivered all right?"

"It is necessary. Before that, however, considerable may happen. I do not think I will be occupied more than an hour."

Nick proceeded to the address that Madame Cyrille Monterey had given the police captain.

It was in a section less exclusive than the Central Park district.

The house, too, was one divided into small flats.

When a servant came to the door at which Nick rang she scrutinized the caller rather closely.

"Mrs. E. E. Cole?" intimated Nick.

"No—yes!" instantly the maid corrected herself.

"Well, which is it?"

"Who are you?"

"I represent the police."

This cast the girl into something of a flurry.

"Step in," she said, "but please wait."

Nick wondered what Madame Cyrille Monterey intended doing with her furniture, for the apartments before him were well equipped already.

The girl closed a door after her. In a minute she reopened it to ask:

"Are you the police captain?"

"No, but the police captain sent me," replied Nick.

Again the girl retired as before, but after a greater length of time she came into evidence once more.

She showed Nick into a half-darkened room. In its most shadowy corner, on a couch, lay a woman.

Nick advanced rather dubiously, but clearly enough he enunciated:

"This is Madame Monterey?"

"Yes, sir," responded the recumbent lady, faintly. "Be seated."

Nick tried to get a closer glimpse of the person, who, judging from all points, was destined to lead him into the most mysterious maze of his professional career.

Only an outlined view was possible, however; from it Nick was rather disappointed in his anticipations.

The woman showed little strength of purpose; the captain had again been deceived.

She was far from beautiful, although she answered to all he had said pertaining to indolent assurance and audacity.

"You must excuse me," she observed, "but the shock of the morning occurrence——"

"I understand," nodded Nick.

"It has prostrated me. I can receive you in no other way. Is it necessary that you see me?"

"Quite so, madame."

"I told the police captain all I had to tell."

"You must tell me something more."

"No, no!" disputed the woman rather forcibly for an invalid. "I shall not talk. I have already gained an undeserved notoriety. The shameful innuendoes of the press——"

"Refute them!"

"How?"

"By throwing more light on this subject. I am sure you can do so."

"You are too sure!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes—and I will not be annoyed!" declared the woman hastily, rather pettishly.

"I do not wish to annoy you."

"I consulted a lawyer; he tells me to say nothing further."

"And you have decided to follow his advice?"

"Most assuredly."

"Then we shall have to summon you to the coroner's inquest."

"When is that?"

"It has been postponed till to-morrow."

"Ah! to-morrow? Very well, if I must, I must—but until then I will not talk."

Nick had arisen—he had even turned to leave the room. Suddenly a thought inspired him.

"You are going to move your furniture here, are you?" he inquired.

"Certainly—this belongs to another person."

"I asked because the landlord at your former place may question your right to the two patent rockers."

"Oh! let him keep them," said the woman carelessly.

"But are they not yours?"

"Yes, they are mine; still, I have been the means, it seems, of making his house notorious. I will not dispute over a trifle like that."

Nick Carter shrugged his shoulders as he left the house.

The woman had not fooled him.

There was no such article as a patent rocker among the furniture of the suite.

Nick had taken a bold risk, because it had suddenly struck him from viewing various things that this woman was not what she pretended to be.

In fact, she was not. Nick Carter had yet to see the real Madame Cyrille Monterey.

## CHAPTER V.

### DREGS OF THE PAST.

Nick Carter planted a second assistant at the scene of his latest discovery.

In other words, from a telephone point of communication in plain view of the house he had just left, the detective waited until Patsy had arrived from home headquarters.

Nick apprised his young and active helper of what was expected of him.

He explained the circumstances of the new complication.

Patsy was to see who came to the house, and who left it.

When Nick rejoined Chick at the apartment house both were convinced that they would experience some difficulty in locating the former occupant of Suite D.

"She has, of course, hired that woman to personate her?" observed Chick.

"Through to-day."

"No longer?"

"I think not. The relief she experienced when told that the inquest was set for to-morrow assures me that by that time she, too, expects to take flight."

"What do you make her out to be?"

"A dummy, planted by the Monterey woman to serve the occasion."

"The occasion being to-day?"

"Until Madame Monterey settles up her affairs."

"Such as moving her furniture?"

"Precisely. She is some ordinary person, I saw that, and hired to sustain the role until to-morrow only."

"But suppose the police captain had called—he would have detected the imposture."

"Yes, but she made sure by inquiry first that I was not the police captain."

"That is true. What do you suggest?"

"As we agreed, the woman is our starting point. We must follow the furniture."

"You think some one will come for it?"

"I think so, yes."

"Well, lock me in."

"You intend to be sure of your task!"

"Very sure!"

Nick understood his assistant's intention.

He locked Chick in and returned the key to the landlord.

The detective visited the headquarters of the secret service.

He had seen enough in the account books at the Marston home to understand the general scope of the securities that were missing.

Some of them it would be difficult to get rid of; others might be readily floated in New York or elsewhere.

Nick saw to it that certain safeguards were spread to prevent any wholesale disposition of the property in question.

At six o'clock that evening the detective returned home and for two hours awaited a word from Chick or Patsy.

It arrived from neither. As nine o'clock struck Nick went up to the apartment house.

He learned that the furniture had been sent for—it had been carted away barely an hour previous.

Nick was sanguine that Chick would soon materialize with some interesting information.

In this he was not disappointed.

It was shortly before midnight when Chick put in an appearance.

He looked ruffled up, but he exhibited decided sprightliness.

"Well, Chick?" interrogated the detective.

"All is well!"

"You followed the furniture?"

"I went with the furniture."

"Boxed up?"

"In the rather cramped quarters of a movable closet."

"Where did they take the furniture?"

"To a second-hand dealer."

"Oh! Then the lady is selling out?"

"She is selling out."

"Preparing to leave the scene?"

"Not at all. She is arranging to sail under new colors."

"She is bold!"

"And handsome. As I say, the plunder was carted to the rear door of a large second-hand establishment. I was closely squeezed. I had the merest keyhole crack to look out through, but I managed."

"To see Monterey?"

"And hear her and her companion."



"She had one?"

"Yes—a man. They were waiting for the proprietor, and they sat down on a sofa not six feet away from me. Finally the proprietor came in. The woman is keen. She wasted half an hour haggling over five dollars. Finally the man paid her in cash, and then she and her escort went away."

"And you?"

"Oh! I couldn't get away. And, to tell the truth, I wasn't worrying much over it."

"How was that, Chick?"

"I had heard considerable."

"About the Marston affair?"

"No—barely a word about that. That is a dead issue to the woman. If you seek evidence from her on that theme she will be a forced witness, for her aim is to get out of the notoriety and trouble. This much I gathered from the general tone of the conversation. The Marston matter is not bothering her."

"Well, so far as the record goes we have nothing against her."

"I reasoned that what you most desired was to put your hand on her when wanted."

"Right."

"Well, then, I can aid you."

"You know where she is going to locate next?"

"No, I do not; but I know a play that she and her escort planned for to-morrow."

"What is it, Chick?"

"I believe they are going to lift some jewelry. They mentioned the store."

"Where is it?"

"Koch & Bernard, on Broadway. They are to go there at ten to-morrow. Of course we alight on them there."

Chick had been keeping something back; he sprang it now.

"The chief personage—the woman—we know her. She is Mrs. Abigail Schwarz."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes," assented Chick definitely—"Madame Cyrille Monterey, the pretended widow of the Brazilian Minister of War, is, in fact, no other than the wife of the convict firebug and life insurance wrecker, Schwarz, sailing under a new guise."

## CHAPTER VI.

### TRICKING THE DIAMOND DEALERS.

Nick Carter displayed a wry face.

"Well, that's surprising," he observed—"that crowd again!"

"What is left of it."

"A lively section, it seems!"

"You could never reach her heretofore. Her husband failed to bribe, outwit or defeat the law. His pals kept him company on the road to Sing Sing; but the wife——"

"Well," said Nick, "here she is! We have the satisfaction of knowing with whom we have to deal. You say she dropped no hint about the Marston affair?"

"Not a lisp; she acts like a person up to any money-making deal. Frustrate her schemes at one point, she breaks out in a new place."

"You are sure of the appointment, Chick?"

"Oh, yes—they discussed it clearly."

"Very well, I will be on hand."

Nick kept his word.

At nine o'clock the next morning Nick "fixed" the patrolman on the beat that took in the jewelry establishment.

Half an hour later Nick was a modest, unobtrusive "blind man," lined up against the railing that protected the show window of the place.

"Nick showed up old and decrepit, with his little stool and alms-collecting tin cup.

The green spectacles he wore were of extraordinary size.

They were unique as well, though a person would scarcely discover this except upon rigid inspection.

The feature of the apparatus was an adaptation of the mirror idea.

With the same facility that a crack rower would use this device to watch the movements of a rival in advance, Nick could now command all necessary territory to keep a close watch on the people he expected.

Meantime, Chick was in the neighborhood, posted to get into play when the proper occasion required.

It was at precisely ten o'clock when the persons Chick had mentioned the evening previous came into view.

The man Nick knew from his assistant's description, and classed him as an occasional confidence man and regular all-around sport.

His companion Nick was glad to get a sight of. In one of his hardest fought professional battles this woman's crowd had given the secret service expert all-kinds of trouble.

They had even planned to take his life, but Nick had delivered a knockout blow in the end that settled a formidable criminal confederation for all time to come, he fancied.

The woman had remained in the background; she was clever, quick, thoroughly unscrupulous, and she just grazed the doors of the penitentiary.

For two months Nick had kept casual track of her movements.

She had left New York, he was informed, with new adherents, and after posing brilliantly in fashionable precincts, she had now returned.

Nick would not have recognized her had he not been looking for her.

She was made up in marked contrast with plain "Mrs. Schwarz," the honest tradesman's wife of old.

Scanning closely, however, first the bold eyes, then the small but square-cut chin, came into recognition.

Prepared to meet her now, it would be im-

possible for this woman to escape Nick's instantaneous recognition anywhere or under any guise hereafter.

The two entered the jewelry store, and their elegant appearance won them immediate attention and consideration.

If the woman had not been chewing gum the repose of her features would have aided her general ladylike appearance.

If the man had not stared about, meantime munching an apple, and disregarding the little niceties of politeness towards his companion he might have passed for a gentleman.

There was a false note in the combination, yet the jeweler, experienced as he was, did not appear to notice it.

He put out a tray of superb diamond rings.

The lady toyed with them—shook her head.

From a particular safe the jeweler brought out a velvet-lined receptacle holding a dazzling array of uncut gems.

These appeared to please the customer. She studied the effect on cushion and ribbon; she played them towards the light with the air of a connoisseur.

She called up her escort, who was at a cane rack studying the variety of walking sticks on display there.

He lounged up negligently, apparently disclaiming any knowledge of diamonds.

Still, he pawed over the collection and pointed, and took another bite at his apple.

Back to the canes he went. Then he inspected a glass case of bric-a-brac.

Having finished his apple by this time, he scrupulously regarded its core, and gave it a toss out through the open door into the street.

It rolled past the curb and into the gutter.

Nick Carter's eyes twinkled.

Where was Chick?

Nick scanned the surroundings on the other side of the street. A short-coated, hunch-shouldered, rowdy-looking fellow was

smoking a cigar almost directly opposite, while he viewed a many-mirrored millinery display.

The expert knew Chick without a sight of his face.

Ventriloquially proficient, he uttered a whistle that sounded as if proceeding from around the corner.

Chick squared around, all attention. Nick began some rapid hand-play.

Then Chick strolled towards the corner; he was fully apprised and knew just what to do.

Suddenly he darted across the street. As he neared the curb he dropped his handkerchief.

He picked it up, mingled with the crowd, and melted away with it.

But the apple core had disappeared; Chick had taken it up with his handkerchief.

Nick now resumed his attention to the people in the store.

He noted a fact that would probably escape ninety persons out of a hundred.

Madame Cyrille Monterey no longer chewed gum.

She was placing a card on the counter. She had selected a stone.

She paid a deposit of ten dollars, and she seemed to be explaining to the jeweler how she wanted the gem set.

The jeweler bowed his thanks obsequiously, the lady drawing on her dainty gloves, her escort shook down his loud cuffs.

In an instant a change came over the scene, sombre as the sudden appearance of a thunder cloud in summer.

The jeweler looked grave, then severe, then suspicious.

He addressed some words to the lady; her head went up with a toss.

Her escort rushed up to the counter, and his big fists reached over towards the jeweler.

The latter now became angry and spoke

some loud words towards the clerks in the store.

Two came up to the customers, another proceeded to the front door.

He closed it and stood determined, as though resolute to defend it with his life.

The man and woman were now the centre of an excited group.

Even a person considerably less acute than Nick Carter—from observation alone and not being able to hear—could have traced, from motions and faces, what was going on.

Evidently some valuable stone, or stones, were missing.

The presumption was clear, irresistible; no other customers had been near that case.

The woman was hotly indignant, the man vociferous and deeply offended.

He threw out his arms suggestively, as if to show his pure, unsullied heart!

He had insisted on being searched.

Nick kept an eye on all these proceedings, but he did not see fit to interrupt them.

A lady stenographer was called from the office. Highly indignant, Madame Monterey was conducted into a little dressing-room.

The man's turn came, and he disappeared with the jeweler.

After a few minutes they came out by the front, the man menacingly waving the ten dollar deposit, which had been returned—the woman threatening that they would "resent the indignity with a suit at law!"

They passed down the street. A minute later Chick passed Nick.

The detective's assistant paused "for charity's sake."

He contributed to Nick's cup; but it was not a penny or a nickel that he dropped.

It was the apple core that he had so cleverly picked up from the street.

Nick remained in his mendicant pose for a while longer.

Finally a slouchy, shambling fellow came along the street.

He paused at the edge of the curb and scanned the pavement beyond.

He seemed surprised, then disappointed, and finally disgusted; he found no apple core.

Nick allowed him to proceed on his way; then he himself entered the jewelry store.

The proprietor and his clerks were scanning the card the woman had left.

They were discussing an investigation of the same, and were advancing all kinds of theories as to the disappearance of the valuables.

Nick approached the proprietor, who had possession of the bit of pasteboard at that moment.

"Let me look?" he observed.

"Who are you?" scowled the jeweler, out of patience with all humanity at that especial moment.

"Then—exchange?" suggested Nick.

He deftly placed one of his own cards in the proprietor's hand.

"Hello!" uttered the latter, reading, and then with a stare.

Nick put his finger to his lips as the man was about to speak his name.

He drew him to one side and took and scanned the woman's card.

It bore audaciously the address of an estimable widow, a member of a wealthy and well-known family.

"You will have only your trouble for your pains," observed Nick, "in hunting down this fraudulent address."

"What do you know, Mr. Carter?" asked the storekeeper, anxiously.

"I watched the whole proceeding."

"I was so flustered I let those people go!"

"I didn't."

"Ah!"

"What did they get?"

"Two stones."

"Valuable?"

"A matter of four hundred dollars."

"Is that one of your gems?"

Nick took the apple core from his pocket and broke it in two.

Nestled among the seeds was a glittering diamond.

"Why! it's the small missing stone!" exclaimed the jeweler.

"The other——" began Nick next.

Shrewd Nick Carter edged his way along the counter till he reached the spot where the recent business transaction had taken place.

Running his hand under the lower molding of the showcase, Nick detached something adhering to the surface.

It was the piece of gum that Madame Monterey had been chewing.

Nick pressed the glutinous mass flat—a tiny pyramid of refulgence began to appear.

"The big stone!" almost shouted the jeweler.

Nick nodded smilingly.

"Now, then," he said, "in about an hour——. Ah! No—now!"

"Now—what?" questioned the jeweler.

"Watch that man—I expected him!"

A "customer" had appeared. He took his position at the diamond case.

A clerk stepped behind it and asked what was wanted.

The newcomer produced a watch and inquired the price for cleaning and repairing it.

Meanwhile he slyly slid one hand along the ridge that Nick's own fingers had just traversed.

Twice he repeated the operation. A look of discomfiture gave way to one of suspicion, of alarm.

The man stated that he would bring in the watch that evening and departed.

"Did you observe him?" questioned Nick.

"Yes," responded the jeweler; "he was looking——"

"For that gum. You understand this latest dodge?"

"I do, now; the man smuggled a stone into the apple core?"

"Which I got."

"The woman pressed a second gem into the gum, and stuck it under the counter."

"Which I got, also."

"Hence their willingness to be searched."

"Precisely."

"A new dodge!"

"Old—now."

"Yes. I am warned, thanks to you—but this fellow, their accomplice?"

"Small game!"

"And the large game—the real game?"

"My assistant has trailed them to cover by this time," assured Nick. "Pass the incident—it simply hitches with a larger matter that we are——"

"Following up?"

"Running down."

The jeweler was entirely content with recovering his stolen property.

Nick was satisfied, for he had a definite hold now on Madame Monterey and her escort.

This gave him a clew for further operations.

The secret service expert wended his way homeward, revolving in his mind a plan for facing the siren swindler and forcing her hand as soon as he received Chick's report as to her new domicile.

Nick had it all plotted out speedily.

As he reached home headquarters, however, his projects were somewhat modified.

Considerable of a surprise greeted the detective.

A stranger was awaiting him, and the unique errand upon which he had come for the time being carried Nick Carter's great mind into some new and rather interesting channels.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DEAD MAN'S SCREED.

The detective's visitor was a person Nick had never seen before.

He was a tall, well-appearing man of about thirty-five.

"Mr. Carter?" he asked, arising.

"Yes," nodded Nick.

"I am Gridley Revere."

Nick waited for further explanations—the name told him nothing.

"A detective—like yourself," pursued the stranger.

"Ah!"

"But not such—a detective—as yourself!"

"You are modest, and you flatter me."

"Not at all. I come from Baltimore. I have very important business with you."

"State it," directed Nick, tersely.

"State it?" repeated the visitor, vaguely, staring at his host.

"Certainly."

Nick had not even sat down, and the man was evidently unused to seeing things done "on the fly," as Nick sometimes did them.

"Well, then," he explained, "we have a case that puzzles us."

"Common, that."

"We are at sea—hopeless. We have not your experience nor gifts down there in Baltimore, Mr. Carter! I have come to put the entire matter in your charge, if you will handle it."

"I am a busy man," said Nick.

"I know that."

"And I am not looking for cases."

"Certainly not!"

"Still—tell what you want."

"It will take quite a few minutes."

"Be seated, then."

Nick found it a saving of time to bar out tedious strangers; some people brought him cases as if they were bestowing presents.

They fancied Nick Carter did professional things for fun—considered that he would gladly undertake all cases that "kept his hand in."

Nick usually headed off such applicants, as has been said.

The present caller, however, soon got down to business in a way that showed him to be no trifler.

"I have an interesting and an intricate story to tell," he prefaced.

"Tell it," directed Nick.

"Beginning at the start, Mr. Carter, do you know that man?"

The Baltimore detective produced a photograph.

"Yes," answered Nick promptly, glancing at the picture.

His visitor looked pleased, yet amazed at the rapid identification.

"That is Tim Dorgan," said Nick, "the box man."

"You take him quick!"

"It is a good picture. I have not seen Tim for some time. Is he in Baltimore?"

"He was in Baltimore," corrected the caller, rather pointedly.

"Working?"

"He did some work, yes."

"In his line?"

"A coal office safe."

"What did he get?"

"Quite a heap—but we got him."

"You have Tim Dorgan in custody, then?"

"No—I say we got him."

"And failed to hold him?"

"He slipped us."

"You should have looked out for that."

"We couldn't."

"Why not?"

"He died on our hands."

"Tim Dorgan dead?"

"Only four days since."

"And his latest plunder?"

"That is what we are after—that is why we came to you."

"It is hidden away?"

"It is lost to us, so far as we can find out."

"And you want me to trace it for you?"

"That is it."

"By going to Baltimore?"

"Oh, yes—you must come to Baltimore."

Nick shook his head positively.

"Impossible," he announced.

"Don't say that, Mr. Carter!"

"I have to say it. I am at present engaged on a most important case—it would not do to neglect it. A matter of a million and a half is involved, while your affair——"

"Only ten thousand dollars, but that is a big stake with us."

"I am sorry I cannot investigate the affair personally," said Nick, "but, as I have said—it is impossible."

The Baltimore officer looked severely disappointed.

"I can suggest a ready man, however."

"Oh! we have ready men. We need you; no other."

The visitor was about to depart; there was no faltering when Nick made a decision.

"I will ask you a question before I go," abruptly announced the Baltimore man.

"Certainly."

"Will you take a look at another picture?"

"Yes."

"A chance in a million of your knowing the original."

"The one chance sometimes counts."

"This is a woman," explained the officer, "and we have reason to believe that she is in New York."

"Let me have a look," suggested Nick.

The officer was delving in an inside pocket. He presently produced a small gem-photograph, made to fit into the back of a watch case, a locket, or the like.

Nick glanced at it.

"I know this person," he said.

"What!"

"You did not expect that?"

"I didn't—it was a mere hazard. And you know her?"

"I said so."

"She is here?"

"In New York, yes."

"Within reach?"

"I think so."

"Mr. Carter find her for us!"

The officer's excitement roused magically. Nick was cool almost to the point of seeming indifference.

But he only masked an interest of the intensest description.

The picture the Baltimore man had produced represented a personality in which Nick was deeply concerned at the present moment.

The officer had shown Nick a portrait of Madame Cyrille Monterey.

"Tell me about this picture," directed Nick.

"It was found on Tim Dorgan. While drinking, he had shown it to a man, claiming her to be his backer, the woman he expected to marry some day—when she got a divorce."

"Yes, she is a married woman."

"Mr. Carter, you know everything!"

"I know that this woman's husband is in Sing Sing——"

"Yes?"

"For I put him there. But—proceed."

"Tim Dorgan indicated that she was a New York woman. But this may be irrelevant?"

"Irrelevant?—no!" pronounced Nick Carter, emphatically.

"We treated it as a mere incident—an offshoot of the main matter. Of course the woman might know considerable of Dorgan's business——"

"Of course, she naturally would!"

"But it is unlikely that she had any knowledge regarding his Baltimore strike."

"Why so?"

"He was nabbed too quick."

"How was that?"

"We have reason to believe that his plunder is all in Baltimore."

"Give me the details of the matter," suggested Nick, quite "willing" now.

"Well, then, Dorgan dropped into the town on Tuesday. On Wednesday night he cracked the coal office. He got away with the stuff, but was seen at daylight. He was captured in his bed at a hotel."

"With incriminating evidence about him?"

"His tools, but not the plunder. We took him to the station and locked him up. Our plan was to hold him unbooked till we tried the sweat-box process, in the hopes of his turning up the stuff."

"How did it pan out?"

"Not at all. He was taken ill the next afternoon."

"A trick?"

"We discovered that, but some time later. He tried what is probably an old game to you—it was a new one to us until we began investigating, afterwards."

"What was that?"

"Some medicine he took must have been very powerful, for it caused a perfect simulation of the symptoms and eruptions of a contagious disease."

"And Dorgan wanted to send for his own doctor?"

"At first we paid no attention to that.

Afterwards, strange to say, the fellow did not seem to care who came or who didn't; he acted as if he were really and seriously sick."

"He was really and seriously sick, perhaps?"

"He acted it. The department doctor visited him, left some medicine. We moved Dorgan to a safe but more comfortable room, and looked in on him very often. About five o'clock we found him dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"The cause?"

"We afterwards knew. Not then."

"What was it?"

"He had overdosed himself in trying to produce the symptoms and eruptions of a contagious malady."

"Hoping you would remove him to a hospital, whence he could easily escape?"

"That was his idea, of course."

"Go on."

"Dorgan at last realized that he was dying."

"You are positive of that?"

"Yes—we found him lying under a window to which he had crawled from his cot."

"Trying to escape?"

"Impossible to escape, for it was heavily barred."

"His motive, then?"

"To cut out a pane of glass."

"Why did he do that?"

"You shall see, Mr. Carter. The man evidently knew that it was all up with him. He did not call for help—he thought only of his hidden plunder."

"He cut out a pane of glass, you said?"

"Yes. We had taken everything away from him except his watch and a heavy diamond ring."

"The ring helped him to break out the pane?"

"Readily."

"After removing it, I infer, he proceeded to write on the pane?"

"With the diamond."

"What did he write?"

"A puzzler—we will come to that in a moment. Having done what he aimed to do, Dorgan approached the window. He was very weak, but he managed to call to and at-

tract the attention of some boys playing 'at handball against the blank brick wall of the fire engine house, next door to the police station, and directly behind it."

"He intended to hire the boys to take his pane message somewhere?"

"That was his idea."

"Where?"

"He never told."

"No?"

"No!"

"Because——?"

"Because, Mr. Carter, as he extended in one hand the pane and in the other his watch—which was to pay for the boys' trouble—and was about to explain what he wanted, the man sank down, stricken."

"And the boys?"

"They were frightened, and ran away. We found man, watch and pane under the window half an hour afterwards. The share of the boys in the matter came to light with a later investigation."

"Dorgan's purpose was apparent."

"Oh! yes—to apprise his pals."

"In Baltimore?"

"Maybe—perhaps not. You see, he collapsed before he uttered a single explanation to the boys."

"I understand that. What did the pane say?"

"That, I told you, is a puzzler."

"How so?"

"A series of confusing, outlandish words."

"Cipher?"

"Is that what you call it? We couldn't make it out. If it's foreign, it's a tongue I never heard of."

"Indeed?"

"It would take a man with a rubber tongue and leather lungs, with patches on the inside, to articulate some of the words!"

"As hard as that? You have the pane?"

"Yes, I brought it."

The visitor drew from a side pocket a package about eight inches long and three wide.

Undoing this, he brought to light two sections of a small pane of glass.

It was broken squarely, and evenly in the centre.

"Accidentally dropped it," explained the Baltimore officer.

"It makes no difference," observed Nick, fitting the two pieces, "not the least."

Nick Carter applied himself to a critical scrutiny of the hair-line diamond writing.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A HINT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

There was a spell of silence, lasting for fully five minutes.

Nick finally looked up from his survey of the two glass fragments.

The glance of the Baltimore detective was anxious and expectant.

"Do you comprehend it, sir?" he inquired.

"No," answered Nick, definitely.

"It's hopeless, then."

"Not that bad. There are two ways of elucidating this writing. The first," continued Nick, deliberately, "is to devote unlimited time to its translation."

"Hours?"

"Days, possibly."

"Ah!" nodded the officer.

"The other way," declared Nick, "is to get in line with the person it was intended for."

"You have it!"

"He—or she—knows how to translate it."

"Oh, surely! What is it—foreign?"

"No, cipher—but on no system."

"How, then?"

"Chance words, selected and understood only by the person having the vocabulary and the key."

"Like the cable code?"

"In a way. Mr. Revere, you had better leave this message with me."

"Surely. You intend to help us?"

"If I can."

"If you can't, we may as well drop the case."

"But I shall not go to Baltimore."

"No?"

"Not at present. You showed me a photograph—the photograph of a woman—and the message may have been intended for her."

"Have you a way of finding out?"

"I am sure that I have."

"Can I help?"

"Not in the least—it all depends on breaking into a willful woman's confidence."

"Are you not exactly the man for that?"

"I shall try to be."

"Then it would be as well for me to go back home."

"You cannot do the least particle of good here, and you may strike some valuable point at the Baltimore end of the line."

This seemed to satisfy Revere. He was delighted with having the co-operation of Nick Carter.

That was what he had come for; it having been accomplished, he was entirely easy in his mind, and exhibited no particular craving for sharing the honors.

Nick was busy, and he dismissed his visitor with a variety of suggestions that would weave into a plausible and promising theory.

The affair might require some assistance at Baltimore and he arranged so that he could reach the visiting officer, under any possible contingency that might arise.

When the man had left, Nick resumed a rigid inspection of the queer glass chronicle that had come into his possession.

The secret service veteran was an adept at ciphers, problems, puzzles.

The one before him, without the key, was meaningless, utter gibberish.

It had no continuity as to expression; and, even translated, it could hardly fail to be disconnected, delineating, suggestive words, rather than completed sentences.

Nick attempted to trace possible methods of transposition, juxtaposition, significance, etc.

On no basis, however, would any test of system apply.

Nick could find no ready key that would fit this complicated secret writing.

Chick, arriving at last, found his superior engrossed in his task.

Nick at once transferred his attention to his assistant's report.

"What became of your people, Chick?" he inquired.

"I traced them to the Hotel Norton."

"They are staying there?"

"They were—at least the woman was. They separated at that place."

"You took the man?"

"Yes, leaving Patsy, who kept close on my tracks, to watch the hotel."

"Where did the man go to?"

"Out of the city. He bought a ticket for Baltimore, and took the first train."

"Baltimore?" repeated the detective, musingly.

Nick recited to his associate the developments of the hour.

"Things are getting clearer, it seems to me!" declared Chick.

"And how are you reading things?"

"Why if this dead Dorgan is a 'bot man'—"

"One of the most notorious safe workers in the East."

"Then, why may he not have got the Marston securities?"

Nick nodded, approvingly.

"I follow you, Chick," he observed.

"And perhaps you have preceded me in figuring out the same deductions?"

"We shall see as you progress."

"He stowed the stuff, made another strike at Baltimore, and probably cached the proceeds of both robberies together."

"Where does Madame Monterey come in?"

"She always was a go-between?"

"She has made such performances a profession."

"Then, why not Tim Dorgan's go-between?"

"Well, Chick," replied the detective, "this is all reasonable and probable. It would furnish an excellent explanation of Marston's visits to the woman."

"Do you proceed on that theory, then?" asked Chick.

"I proceed on any theory that puts us in closer touch with this siren swindler."

"You have the combination nipped."

"Oh! I could jail them, but the thumb-screws would not force confession from that superbly-nerved female."

"What might?"

"Sleek, smooth work."

"Well, that's your specialty, I'm thinking!"

"Are you, indeed, thinking that, Chick? Perhaps I might succeed. I must find a way to get in touch with the woman first, you know?"

"And then work her?"

"That's the plan; meantime, not losing sight of a matter concerning which she may possibly really know nothing—the tragedy at the apartment-house."

"Of course these incidents all fit."

"They do, when you have the keystone to join the general structure."

"If you only had it!"

"I think I have it, Chick," asserted Nick, quietly. "In fact, this cipher message has given me some decidedly enlightening ideas."

## CHAPTER IX.

### CLOSING IN.

Three days passed by. Nick Carter did not disturb Madame Cyrille Monterey.

Neither had he got "in touch with her."

In fact, matters in the case in hand had come to a temporary standstill.

Enoch Marston had been buried, and the daughter, Violet, in deep grief, had taken up her home with some distant relatives.

Nick sent her an encouraging message, directing a continuation of guarded secrecy concerning his share in the matter.

Those three days the detective had vigilantly watched every visible point in the game.

A description of Madame Monterey's New York confrere had been sent to Detective Revere, in Baltimore.

There could be no doubt that he had gone to the latter city to find out what he could concerning a dead pal's secrets.

Revere informed Nick of his movements there in detail.

Posing as Robert Davis, a Vermont cousin of the deceased burglar, he had made many inquiries at the police station.

He was also ferreting among the crowd of crooks with whom Dorgan had associated during his brief sojourn in the Monumental City.

Every move he made—in fact, every letter he wrote—was noted by Revere, whom Nick had instructed to maintain the closest shadow.

Meanwhile, Madame Monterey was a somewhat unsatisfactory problem to the famous detective.

This was so, because she made no move; she was entirely quiescent.

Suspicious aroused by the total failure of the diamond stealing scheme might have influenced her caution.

At all events, she was the most retired and silent guest that the Hotel Norton held within its four walls.

Friends and accomplices seemed to have been warned to keep away, for not a soul visited her.

Nick knew this, for at every hour of the day and night, himself or some one of his three peerless assistants was in or about the hotel, on watch and duty.

"She is waiting for something," hinted Chick, on that third day of uneventful monotony.

"Certainly—waiting for her friend, this so-called Davis, to find out where Dorgan has planted his enormous plunder," replied the detective.

"She gets letters from him regularly."

"They are not particularly encouraging, though."

"True."

Chick knew; he had managed to see the inside of one of those letters.

"I give her another day to break out with some kind of a manifestation," stated Nick.

"And if she does not?"

"Then—I shall break in."

"That will start the ball rolling!"

"I fancy so!"

For the first time that evening Madame Monterey left the hotel, deeply veiled.

Nick had noted the growing anxiety of her appearance, and her suggestive movements during the past forty-eight hours.

The woman had become restless, pale, nervous, dissatisfied-looking.

Patsy took up the trail of the vehicle. He was gone two hours.

He reported immediately after the return of the woman.

The latter at once repaired to her room; Patsy speedily joined his chief in a secluded corner of the smoking apartment of the hotel.

"What have you found, Patsy?" interrogated Nick.

"She went to a clairvoyant."

"Where?"

"Etelka—Twenty-second street."

Nick knew the place and its occupant, by repute.

He so declared, and his young assistant continued:

"There was a seance there."

"A crowd, then?"

"Which she joined."

"You got near enough to watch proceedings?"

"Oh! I took a hand myself," coolly announced Patsy.

"You did?"

"Certainly—why not? Everybody was welcome who had a dollar—I had a dollar."

"Well spent, I infer?"

"A good deal of a bore, though!"

"Rappings?"

"The whole thing: Cabinet, spirits, slate-writing. I sat next to Madame Monterey, and once had hold of her hand. That woman is fearfully worked up."

"Nervous?"

"On fire with some distress she cannot conceal."

"She betrayed that in her manner?"

"She was in earnest in her search for the mystic? She got no satisfactory demonstrations in the seance circle, but she did in a private interview with Etelka."

"You were present at that also?"

"I won't say exactly 'present'—but I was there!"

"What did the madame say?"

"She told Etelka that she was very much worried about a friend. She was willing to pay royally to get a communication from the friend, provided there was anything in the clairvoyant business. She is a remarkably shrewd woman."

"She demonstrated it?"

"She turned the clairvoyant inside out in ten minutes. Etelka confessed that she might not be able to help her, and Madame Monterey would not be fooled. But Etelka said there were higher 'occults' than she."

"She verily believes in such?"

"She claimed to."

"And Madame Monterey?"

"Etelka convinced the madame also. So they made a bargain."

"What kind of a bargain, Patsy?"

"Etelka promised to see if she could get a high professor of the art—named Blecha, I think—a rare one, a specialist in spiritual science."

"Who was to give Madame Monterey a sample of the real art?"

"That was it."

"When is it to come off?"

"To-morrow evening."

"At Etelka's?"

"Yes."

Chick detailed to Nick all that he had heard at the private seance as he joined him outside of the hotel, and they proceeded homeward together.

"Madame Monterey wishes to find out something?" suggested Chick.

"Evidently."

"The Dorgan secret?"

"It looks so, Chick."

"Which your glass message comprises?"

"Yes."

"Davis is groping in the dark at Baltimore—"

"That we know."

"And, driven to her wits' end, Madame Monterey, strong-minded as she is, hopes that an appeal to the spirits will develop something."

"You construe it correctly, Chick," accented the detective.

"You are going to show her some spirits?"

"That is my plan."

"Good! It will work."

If it did not work, there would be no fault on the part of Nick Carter.

Chick voiced this emphatic sentiment as his superior left home headquarters in a secret way the next morning.

Nick was made up in a guise so perfect that he would have been given the front seat on sight at any convention of mediums in the land.

The long hair, the solemn face, the hair-cloak, the clerical dress, were faultlessly suggestive and impressive.

Nick Carter was about to pose as a con-

quer of spirits, and he planned to play the role audaciously, artistically and effectively.

## CHAPTER X.

### NICK CARTER AS A MEDIUM.

It had been Chick's work the night previous to pursue some necessary inquiries regarding both Etelka, the clairvoyant, and the specialist she had mentioned—Blecha.

At eleven o'clock in the morning Nick Carter entered the apartments of this last-named individual.

The detective had mentally traversed the ground he had intended to cover, and was prepared for the occasion.

He sent in a card bearing a high-sounding French name.

Nick understood the language perfectly, and all about France, so there was no danger of his being tripped up in his new character.

Nick was ushered into the presence of Professor Blecha, and found him to be just such an individual as he had pictured him.

Blecha was one of those pompous charlatans who attract a rather high-toned and exclusive clientele.

He welcomed Nick inquiringly, rather than with cordiality.

Nick stated his business. He was anxious to give "a demonstration" in New York.

"As they were members of the same calling," he hinted, "an interchange of courtesies would be only the professional due."

At this the professor froze—solid.

"I could not help you," he asserted; "my own circle rely exclusively on my personal unaided power."

"Ah! professor, I do not propose an invasion," suggested Nick.

"No?"

"Certainly not. Let me be frank."

"If you please."

"I understand that you have many outside calls?"

"More than I care to attend; my home practice is exacting."

"For instance, Etelka has pleaded for a special seance?"

"You are a mind-reader, it seems!"

"Not in this case—but my statement is true?"

Blecha moved his hand to a table and rested it on an envelope there.

"I have just received the intimation," he admitted.

"And you will attend?"

"I—may," announced Blecha, deliberately; "Etelka has sent me many clients."

"But the pay cannot be large?"

"That is of little consequence."

"Still, I will double the fee for the privilege of conducting that seance myself."

"Sir! your motives?" demanded the professor.

"The opportunity to demonstrate my powers, and secure an introduction into the metropolis."

"Oh! that is it?"

"What else can it be? Observe, Professor Blecha—my plane is far below yours—we would not collide. Your great reputation can hardly stoop to her sphere without an injury."

"You—double the fee?"

"Willingly."

"Very well; I consent."

"I am grateful."

This was how Nick Carter worked the oracle in order to carry through the initiatory part of his scheme.

Etelka did not seem to be particularly disappointed when, an hour later, the detective presented an explanatory and introductory epistle from Professor Blecha.

He had sent a substitute, it was true—this new and unknown star was not the great and only Blecha.

But Nick was delightfully "foreign," and, in contrast with his majestic and impressionable appearance, Blecha was a dwarf, a pigmy.

Etelka let Nick into her secrets far enough to significantly indicate that she had a client with money who would pay well for valuable services rendered.

There was covert slyness, yet real anxiety, in this presentation of the conditions.

"You will quietly help me," observed Nick. "I shall do the rest."

"The lady will have to be told some real facts."

"I shall tell them," promised Nick.

"She is shrewd—you cannot humbug her."

"I shall outdo Professor Blecha, madam," assured Nick.

"That will suffice, then."

Nick looked over Etelka's mystic paraphernalia; he selected a close spirit cabinet, and he told Etelka how he intended to operate.

When Nick appeared at the studio that evening, at eight o'clock, he found Madame Monterey awaiting his arrival.

She acknowledged the introduction with a shrewd, penetrating glance.

Nick passed muster, for presently the madame looked hopeful, although at first she had been suspicious and anxious.

Nick personally attended to all the requisite details of conditions and environment.

He set the cabinet in the centre of the rooms, then he placed the chairs—one for Etelka and one for Madame Monterey.

They were to hold a silken cord, which ran from the chairs past the curtains of the cabinet and into his own hands.

The psycho-magnetic current being thus established, "the spirits would direct," and they should see!

Nick had attended too many fake seances not to be fully aware of the system employed.

He trusted partly to impressibility, partly to positive knowledge.

The lights were turned out, the poses were established.

There was a weird spell of perfect silence.

In sepulchral tones Nick at last voiced the signal from within his secluded closet.

"Proceed!"

"What do you wish to know?" interrogated Etelka in a low tone, addressing her companion of "the outside circle."

Nick detected high-strained discomposure in the tones of Madame Monterey, as she replied:

"I wish to converse with a friend."

"Dead how long?"

"Less than a week."

"It is a man!" spoke Nick, incisively.

"It is a man," murmured the madame in assent.

"I see him. It is a Southern city," prosed Nick in a dreamy way.

"Ah!" uttered Madame Monterey, with a gasp of surprise and of hope.

"He has tools—peculiar tools. He is an expert. A sculptor? A veil makes object dim, and I cannot clearly see."

"Heavens!" murmured the siren swindler; "he tells! he tells!"

"Be calm—do not break the mystic influence," warned Etelka.

Nick felt the cord vibrate. Madame was getting worked up.

He ventured a further experiment.

"He is dead. A pall hovers over him. Grief? No, there is no mourner. Can I construe? Ah! I have it."

"Speak! speak!" fluttered the agitated madame.

"Mystery—a secret!"

"Yes! yes!—a secret?"

"Of importance—of magnitude."

"Continue, I pray!" besought the madame fervently.

Nick Carter was hitting the mark, but the great test was yet reserved.

He indulged in various sighs, moans and interjections—as though struggling with some masterly demon.

"Reseda!" he suddenly uttered.

"Marvelous!" gasped the madame.

"Sit still—be calm, or you will spoil all," abjured Etelka, herself considerably astonished at the brilliant success of this new foreign medium.

"Spiro—Guam—Sirocco!"

At each word Madame Cyrille Monterey uttered a low but sharp cry; every word struck home.

They were phrases borrowed from that message on glass.

Nick had now established two facts.

The burglar Dorgan, beyond all doubt, had burglarized the Marston home.

Madame Monterey was his go-between in negotiations with the dead trustee and she understood the cipher code employed in the diamond trceries.

All now depended on the utmost shrewdness and caution.

Nick was bestowing pearls of value, he realized; at the same time he was risking their final loss to himself, with no recompense.

Once the madame was possessed of the secret of the hidden plunder, her lips would be sealed.

Nick feigned to give her just sufficient information to whet her ardor, to arouse intense faith in his mystic power.

He was juggling blindly, for he knew not what word selected from the remembered message might supply the hint, the key, to the dead burglar's secret.

Two more words he tried. They were:

"Dynamo—Curios."

"More! more!" breathed the woman, excitedly.

"Do you understand?"

"Yes! yes!"

"The message tells?"

"In part—not the essential part. Proceed! continue! I beseech you!" panted the overwrought woman.

Nick mumbled to himself, muttered.

"I grope," he declared. "It is a strange tongue—even to the spirits. There are other words—"

"Oh, tell them!"

"Curios."

"You told that."

"Its meaning? I blunder. I stumble. It is Greek to me. I cannot construe. One hint of enlightenment, and I can proceed."

"'Baltimore.'"

"Ah! they said a Southern city."

Nick reserved his play.

He was adroitly luring the woman; she was eager, persistent, ardent.

"Ah!" he exclaimed.

He made a great ado of exhaustion from his great psychic effort. Then he said solemnly:

"The spirits are mute—the trance is broken."

"But you have only told half!" cried Madame Monterey in a frenzy.

"The rest the spirits will tell when the conditions are favorable."

"But how—where?"

"At Baltimore."

"But they will not appear at my bidding—they will not come with me!"

"No—with me. If it is important—"

"Oh, greatly so! I will pay you your own price. I will enrich you!"

"Then I will accompany you to Baltimore," proceeded Nick; "there to receive the remainder of this spirit message."

## CHAPTER XI.

### AT MIDNIGHT.

"You are ready?"

Yes, madame; but 'the circle'?"

"I will take you to friends."

"In your confidence?"

"Completely so."

"I am at your orders."

The above conversation took place in the city of Baltimore.

Nick Carter had succeeded beyond his fondest expectations.

Not for a moment did Madame Cyrille Monterey suspect the game that was being played upon her.

Nick's masterly rendition of the role of a medium had dazzled, fascinated her.

He had bewildered her by opening the door of a dead secret just far enough to inflame her imagination and excite her hopes.

Ardent, enraptured in these, the siren swindler closed her eyes to suspicion, caution, safety.

Nick held a decided advantage; until he revealed all of that message on glass this woman was his follower, his slave.

She scarcely allowed him out of her sight, after disclosing what to her were marvelously supernatural revelations.

The shrewd detective was satisfied now that the stolen Marston securities were hidden in Baltimore.

He had told the woman that he must go there to get the final "inspiration."

Wise and crafty in most matters, she fell into this flimsy lure like the veriest novice.

When they arrived, she saw that her counsellor was sumptuously provided for at the best hotel.

She occupied an adjoining suite, and Nick knew that her eye was constantly upon him.

When evening came she flitted away for an hour or so.

When she returned she left a carriage in waiting at the curb.

tors up to this point—all had gone smoothly for Nick Carter.

When the villain who had chloroformed Lucile had borne her into a dark hallway, Nick understood that this man's part was to silence and detain her.

Nick followed the three others. Madame Monterey, like a skilled burglar, had forced the door of the house they finally reached.

Soon they were in the kitchen. They then opened cupboards, examined wall pockets, crannies, corners.

Then the trap in the floor was discovered; this was Dorgan's secret hiding place.

Now, blank-faced, into it, the trio stared—glared.

Davis had reached down. The hole was not entirely empty.

Some scraps of paper littered it. These the woman seized with devouring eyes.

"Beaten!" she uttered, hysterically, reading the writing on one.

"What?" asked Davis.

Nick, at the window, pressed closely to a broken pane, and caught the reply:

"Coal company—ten thousand dollars. This is the plunder of Dorgan's last haul."

"Never mind that trifle!"

"The Marsten securities—a million and a half! I am astounded! crazed! agonized! raved Madame Monterey, "for, see! the annotations on this discarded envelope! The securities were here, that royal fortune——"

"But—gone?"

"Do you not see?"

"The—girl——"

"Would she stay in this hovel, the heiress to a princess' dowry? No—she knew nothing of her father's wealth, because she knew nothing of his real business."

In overpowering anguish Madame Monterey threw up her fair white hands.

From her grasp there dropped a card that she had just taken up.

"Cruel! cruel!" she wailed.

"What is it? Don't give way!" said Davis.

"That wretch—Stryker!"

"What?"

"Revenge!—fate! My Nemesis! I see it all! The enemy I have feared; the pursuing

demon; the man I was going to ask that medium about, Stryker——"

"He has been here?"

"He has anticipated, for there—left accidentally, or perhaps in satirical derision—in his card, bearing his name! My soul turns sick!"

"Courage!"

"There is nothing to hope for! I discarded him. He swore revenge. While I fancied he was leagues away from New York, he was lurking near, nursing his revenge."

"You deceived him, remember."

"Do you think I would marry a half-crippled mountebank?"

"You led him to believe so!"

"Ah! he was keener than I! He must have known that I was negotiating with Marston for the return of the securities with which Dorgan had fled to Baltimore. It was he, Stryker, who hung Marston over my doorway, to blast my respectability in the eyes of society!"

"Hah!"

"He came to Baltimore—ferreted out Dorgan's secret. He has baffled us—the securities are gone! Oh! what shall we do?"

"Act!"

"How?"

"Before you lured this man to crime he lived here?"

"Yes. I see your point. Where? I do not know. But he had two friends. I remember where they passed their time."

"Nail them!" advised Davis.

"We can try."

The trio hastily left the house. At the dark doorway they paused to take up the man who had the girl in charge. She was now a dead issue in the case.

Nick made what changes he could in his appearance, and kept well up in the group.

They were piloted by the woman. She led them into a street where occasional lighted up second stories were guarded by shades.

Nick discerned that they were in a locality given over to gambling dens.

From one of these two young men came out.

"Luck!" said Madame Monterey suddenly, "into the shadow! It is our men!"

"Both!" muttered Davis. "Now then—sure, quick and sure!" he advised his two companions.

The two young men approached the group and upon them the trio sprang.

Nick divined the scheme—to make prisoners of the twain till they told the whereabouts of Stryker.

The astounded duo put up a fight; Nick saw a knife drawn.

A chivalrous impulse carried the detective into the melee; his prowess turned the tide.

Springing before the menaced young men, the detective with one hand clutched a downward speeding billy, with the other he knocked a knife from the grasp of a second assailant. Nick Carter held this ruffian's wrist stationary.

Davis, whirled aside, again advanced; he brushed Nick's face and caught at his coat.

Nick held him by the throat, but he could not prevent a disastrous climax.

His glasses were knocked from his eyes and his coat torn free, revealing the certain truth that he was disguised.

Enough was retained of his "medium" identity to enlighten shrewd Madame Monterey.

She, hovering close to the contestants, announced a double identification.

"Davis!" she cried, "look! The medium, and—Nick Carter!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"You, Cyrille!"

The man who shouted these words arose bravely, though he was lame.

It was Stryker, of whom Nick had first heard three hours previous.

That street melee forced the detective to act summarily.

He had summoned the local police aid and the three male criminals were given in charge.

With the two men he had rescued, Nick held an earnest consultation.

He told them who he was; he induced them to tell where Stryker lived.

Nick went thither, and he forced Madame Monterey to go with him.

Locating Stryker's rooms, he had abruptly pushed his female prisoner through the doorway.

Those two confronted each other—the baffled siren, the duped lover.

Stryker's eyes blazed with sinister ferocity.

"You, Cyrille?" he repeated. "I know you have come to beg, to plot, to lure away what I got first! Try!"

Stryker ran toward a secret door and tore it open.

"Take the plunder—if you dare!" he defied.

A magnificent dog strode out—big and fierce as a lion.

It seemed ready to spring, and was snarling angrily. A round iron box attached to its great steel collar.

"Very good!" said the detective, revealing himself; "better than a safety vault; but——"

"Nick Carter!"

"Ah! you save a formal introduction."

"This woman——"

"She is in custody."

"Myself?"

"That depends!"

"Well, I have my revenge!"

Nick went up to the great mastiff. It backed. His eye dominated it. Then, almost cowering before that supreme iron will, the dog allowed the detective to place his hand upon its head.

Nick detached the box; it held what he supposed.

The secret service expert was able to restore to the Baltimore victims their stolen ten thousand dollars; the Marston million and a half in securities were found at last.

Stryker admitted that he had employed a friend to help him carry Marston into the New York apartment-house secretly, and hang him over the doorway of the siren swindler—to disgrace, to terrify her.

He had at first taken Marston for a lover; subsequently he had come upon him dead in a doorway.

Marston had so suffered with anxiety over the stolen securities that it had brought on heart failure.

Madame Monterey, alias "Schwarz," and all her accomplices were promptly sent to prison.

With Stryker, the detective dealt more leniently.

Nick brought a message of peace and happiness to Violet Marston the next day.

Her father's honor was completely vindicated, and she could now recall the love of an estimable young man whose attentions she had conscientiously dismissed when trouble darkened her young life.

Nick wound up the Marston case with one of his usual grand and humane acts.

He placed Lucile Dorgan in the hands of a kind-hearted woman, who saved her as a brand from the burning.

The innocent girl never knew of her father's real connection with the league of crime broken up by the fearless, indefatigable Nick Carter!

THE END.

The next number of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY will contain "Nick Carter Makes a Loan."



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