

# Detective Burns Narrates Story With Thrills

## "THE IRON CLAW"

BY  
ARTHUR  
STRINGER

[Read this story in the Palladium and see it at the Palace.]

"And what do we gain by that?"

"We'll fill our big thirty-thousand dollar mausoleum with thirty big policemen, and round up the gang before Legar can even smell a rat."

But Enoch Golden remained unconvinced.

"Well, it may be a brilliant plan, but you can please leave me out of it," he finally announced.

"That's just what I've been asking for," explained Manley. "All I want is to be allowed to conduct it in my own way."

David Manley, however, did not conduct that strange funeral altogether in his own way. Carefully as every detail had been planned, there were one or two minor features which at the time escaped his attention.

The most inconspicuous and yet the most vital of these was, perhaps, the personality of the driver of the third carriage in that small cortege which wended its way so decorously from the Golden home. For under the funeral outfit of this placid-eyed driver reposed the stalwart body of a certain One-Lamp Louie, long known among his associates as an habitue of the Owl's Nest and an underground agent for Jules Legar himself.

Now One-Lamp Louie gave no promise of either active or passive interference with these duly appointed mortuary exercises until the city itself had been left well behind. Then, awakening to the fact that they were traversing a desirably sequestered stretch of road, he watched intently for certain prearranged signals from his one-armed accomplice. Immediately after the discovery of those looked-for signs the spirited team driven by One-Lamp Louie showed unexpected yet unmistakable evidences of restiveness.

But there was a limit to what that team of spirited blacks would endure. And they suddenly, to all intents and purposes, determined to follow their own line of travel at their own rate of speed, for, as the driver sat on the box apparently sawing on the reins, that exasperated team plunged suddenly forward, swerved across the road, and went galloping down a tree-screamed bypath which was little more than a cart trail winding in and out through slopes of greensward and shrubbery.

Half a mile deeper in that shrubbery this runaway team would surely have reached the spot where a black limousine stood hidden away in the shadow of laurel-copse, had not still another and an equally unheralded factor entered into the situation. This factor took the form of a high-power roadster in which was seated a man wearing a yellow mask. His irruption into that orderly little procession, indeed, proved as abrupt as One-Lamp Louie's eruption from it. And he seemed plainly suspicious of both Louie's motives and movements, for he lost no time in swinging from the highway and plowing recklessly after the runaway carriage.

As his car approached the runaway

cab that mysterious stranger, known as the Laughing Mask, stepped to the

running-board of his roadster, leaning far out as the two swerving vehicles drew together. One-Lamp Louie, whatever he may have thought of that approach, had little means of evading it. To swing off what narrow road remained before him seemed frankly suicidal. To lash his team to greater effort was already out of the question. To take his hands from the reins, even, along that uncertain road, was equally foolhardy. So the strange race went on, the swaying and bounding cab with a white-faced girl tossed about under its hood, the leaping and lurching roadster, every second drawing closer down on its quarry yet every second threatening to turn turtle over one of the grassy embankments above which it shuddered and slewed.

It was the Laughing Mask, leaning far out from his running-board, who threw open the cab-door and called sharply to the startled girl.

"Quick," he commanded.

For one moment she hesitated.

Then she reached out for the unsteady hand groping for her.

The next moment she found herself sitting back, a little breathless, in the leather-upholstered seat of the roadster and the man in the Laughing Mask smiling down at her.

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The Black Watch.  
A number of things had happened and were happening to disconcert, if not to discourage, the redoubtable Legar. That astute young adventuress, Betsy Le Marsh, alias Williamsburg Elsie, who, with the aid of divers forged recommendations, had installed herself in the Golden household, repeated and stubbornly reported that David Manley was dead.

Williamsburg Elsie also expressed strong desire to migrate from the house in which she found herself so inquisitive a maid, since that house, she declared, was too full of "queer things" for her comfort.

When, at Legar's suggestion, she had tried to "pump a needleful o' dope" into her altogether unsuspecting mistress, a dead man's face had suddenly appeared between her and the bedroom door. And on two different occasions, after midnight, when she had ventured down to the housekeeper's telephone to send in a secret message to Legar himself, she had found herself confronted by a ghost in the white.

Nor was Betsy Le Marsh the only malcontent. Even Red Egan himself, one of the best "cold-steel" men in all the group that clustered about the Owl's Nest, had of late shown unmistakable signs of mental disturbance. A dead man's ghost, he declared, had looked in through one of the headquarters' windows. Red Egan, it is true, had promptly emptied his six-shooter at that phantasmal intruder, but with nothing more to show for it than a shattered window-sash and six panes of broken glass.

When the master-criminal, to put an end to all such absurdities, had by the force of many dire threats and oaths compelled both One-Lamp Louie and Red Egan himself to repair to the Golden mausoleum and verify the contents of the mysterious casket there

## The "Crevice"

"M'sieu Blaine, I could not do that!" she cried, ignoring his last question. "I would do much, anything that I could for Miss Lawton, but she would be the last to ask of me that I should lead a man on to—to make love to me, in order to betray him! I will do anything that is possible to find out for Miss Lawton and for you, m'sieu, all that I can by keeping my ears open in the house of the minister, but as to M'sieu Paddington—I will not play such a role with any man, even to please Miss Lawton."

"Yet you have been meeting him in the park." The detective leaned forward in his chair and spoken gently, as if merely reminding the girl of some insignificant fact which she had presumably forgotten, yet there was that in his tone which made her stiffen, and she replied impulsively, with a warning flash of her eyes:

"What do you mean, m'sieu? How do you know? I—I told you I had nothing to report concerning M'sieu Paddington, nothing which could be of service to Miss Lawton, and it is quite true. I—I did meet M'sieu Paddington in the park, but it was simply an accident."

"And was the locket and chain an accident, too? That locket which you are wearing at the present moment, mademoiselle?"

"The locket—" Her hand clutched convulsively the bauble of cheap, bright gold hanging

from her neck and convulsively clasped the Black Watch.

While actually nothing more than a small-sized hand grenade, its claim to distinction lay in the tremendous explosive power which stood compressed between its slender metal walls.

Legar was not a coward. Yet as he stood in the clammy midnight air of the Golden mausoleum and quietly removed the screws that held the top on the black casket beside him, he found that combination of silence and gloom and unsavory surroundings a little more of a strain on his nerves than he had anticipated. Yet as he lifted back the safe cover of the casket he did so with a hand that was still steady. Thence he took up his flashlight, and pressing close to the coffin's side, stood studying the pallid face that lay surrounded by its even more pallid drapery of white satin.

He stared at that pallid face long and intently. He stared at it with studious and narrowing eyes. Then he heard a strange and an inexplicable thing.

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THE ROMANTIC TOUCH.  
"George, father objects to my marrying you."  
"He does."  
"Yes, I'm so glad, now how romantic our marriage will be."

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