

The Spotter

By Stephen
Morehouse Avery

In which a very clever crook plays a very clever game—and a clever detective plays one also

THE French Line's veteran eight-day cabin steamer, Comte de Grasse, leaned her starboard shoulder against the towering, rain-spattered night and drove with sturdy habit toward a black west. The long stretch of the wet deck, splotched here and there with the dull yellow light from an open port, was empty save for one solitary figure. He was moderately tall and probably thin, because a felt hat pulled low over his eyes and a raglan topcoat, hanging loosely, concealed even the outlines of his body, and by his restless moving to and from the rail and his impatient, nervous glances at the doors, one might judge that he was young.

Presently the doors opened and a burst of light flooded his sensitive, eagerly expectant face, which became almost immediately dark and scowling. He nodded reluctantly.

The big man in the doorway, clumsy in a too-small dinner jacket, an unlighted cigar in his teeth, lingered for a breath of cool air. "Pretty damp night for a promenade, Prentiss. You'll join us for liqueurs after a while, I hope."

PRENTISS remained watching the door for ten minutes after Mr. Broadhead's departure before its dark square lighted again, framing in actuality the picture which had been in his mind. The wind rushed at the filmy chiffon of her dress, at the inadequate evening wrap streaming from her throat, at her dark, free hair dividing above her white forehead. She was blown into an unconscious pose, a long, slender, round statuette.

Then she came flying. Somehow he had one arm out of that loose topcoat and with a sweep it enveloped them both. His muttered scolding about pneumonia, and her soft gay laughter, abruptly broken into and stifled by his impatience, animated the darkness.

They moved from the doorway along the rail and presently halted, like one form, wrapped in his coat, their faces half visible in the pale glow from a porthole and a dark luster in their eyes. "The mist is sparkling in your hair, Judith," he said. "It's dangerous—but beautiful."

She laughed again. "Don't worry. The happy never get sick."

His arm tightened about her. "How can you be so happy, so sure, after only four days? Ship love at that. How do you know that I'm not an adventurer, a ne'er-do-well, perhaps a crook? Young men without large means wandering indefinitely about Europe need explanation, Judith. You don't even ask."

"I love you, Gerald," she said, "I've met lots of men I admired and respected. Only one I love—like this, anyway. Besides, everything you say applies to me, too. What do you know about me?"

"What you are is all about you, like an aura," he said. "Men are different."

A shadow crossed her face. "I'm worried about something tonight, Gerald. Do you know anything about this business of getting through the

Customs?" The A-deck porthole behind them fell closed and snatched the light from their faces.

MR. BROADHEAD meanwhile sought the congenial atmosphere of the smoking-room. He would find somebody there to talk to perhaps; for Mr. Broadhead liked to talk and "be himself." In four shipboard days a small group had gathered about him in quick, amused intimacy, referring to one another by ironic or descriptive names.

Just now, however, none of them was present at the green-covered table in the corner of the smoking-room which was their rendezvous for after-dinner cordials. Mr. Broadhead's heavy red face drooped and his pale, slightly popped eyes dimmed with disappointment as he sat down alone. Almost at once the waiter placed a yellow Chartreuse before him. "Monsieur's friends are late."

Mr. Broadhead smiled and tasted the

liqueur. "Thank you, André. Yes, but they'll be along." One observed, as he sat there staring into the tiny golden pool in his glass, a certain shrewdness which had not been at first apparent and the sudden alertness which gleamed in his pale eyes.

Perhaps, protruding as they did, they were like spider's eyes, and their owner could see almost behind him where at a small table two men and a woman leaned towards one another in low-voiced confidence. Many watching that table directly would not have seen that momentary glint as one of the men returned his hand into his pocket. But Mr. Broadhead saw it. He could almost have told you the carat weight of the diamonds in the piece.

"The name is Parker, monsieur," said André. "Cabin three-seventeen." People were such simple fools.

Shortly, another man joined Mr. Broadhead, a tall, lank, and evidently ill man, whose black hair was striking-

ly shot with white and whose brow was unnaturally smooth. His name was Paine. "Where's our little party, Broadhead? Ah? Well, here comes the Sphinx, anyway." They called Mrs. Thorndike Perkins that because she gabbled. They called Mr. Paine "Shell Shock."

THE others were a plump little widow named Holton, brown-headed and innocent of the world but tagged nevertheless as "the Adventuress," and Judith's aunt, Mrs. Elliott, a lady of many ailments of which obesity was the most obvious. "Has anybody seen Judith? Well, I just know she's fallen overboard. I just knew she would. It's the one worry she had spared me so far this trip."

Paine reassured her. "I wouldn't be alarmed, Mrs. Elliott. Your Judith is doubtless in good hands, or arms, on deck." His voice faded into inaudible mumbling.

And so all of them were friends,



Mr. Broadhead arose. He was almost overcome with emotion. "You are all very kind," he said. "I don't often fail my friends"

Illustrated by
Charles Lassell



friends who six days ago had never seen one another, or thought they hadn't. Gerald Prentiss thought he hadn't too, but he was to suffer, when he should join the group in the smoking-room, that discomfort which results from trying to drag from memory something which it won't quite release.

Locked by insignificance deep in his memory was an episode in Paris. He had stopped at a jeweler's on the Rue de la Paix to look at a gold wrist watch, although he'd had no desire for a gold wrist watch whatever. In fact, his eyes had been scarcely aware of the gold wrist watch. His ears, however, were

aware of every sound in that small gleaming room. His ears became aware of the big, the undeniably fat lady's voice. "Yes, I like the oval shape all right, and the solid background too. The four big stones are baguette diamonds? Oh, but a hundred and forty thousand francs! That's six thousand dollars. And the duty is eighty per cent—"

The salesman's soft accented English: "Ah, yes, madame, the duty is—unfortunate. Sometimes we think it perhaps unjust. Many of our clients just pay cash."

The fat lady's breathing was audible.

"Oh, I've heard all about that. And then you send in a report to the American Customs—"

"Madame!—but madame must realize how foolish a French jeweler would be to make it—may I say awkward?—for our American friends to buy. Madame pays cash. Madame's name may be Smith, or anything, for all we know. Madame is no doubt a woman of the world."

GERALD stood behind madame, who was a woman of the world, when she inquired at the mail desk of the Bankers Trust Company in the Place Vendôme.

"Anything for me, Miss Richmond? I'm expecting cables. One from my doctor. I have no faith in these foreign doctors."

The girl in charge glanced in her files and shook her head. "Nothing, Mrs. Elliott, I'm afraid. That's Mrs. Mary B. Elliott, isn't it?"

Gerald Prentiss, seated at one of the writing desks, wrote a name, a date, a one-line remark in a small black book, and then Mary B. Elliott sank into that pit of memory from which one night on a ship he would try to recover her.

The smoking-room, when Gerald and Judith came into its thick warmth that night, seemed empty of its customary

cheer. Gerald smiled somewhat grimly and Judith, at his elbow, said: "What is it? Are we running into a storm or something?"

"The danger is not so romantic," he told her. "Ships are often like this just after the Customs declaration blanks have been distributed. Nearly everybody here is going to run in something or other."

She answered him vaguely. "Really? Isn't it dangerous? Oh, come on, there's Auntie and your chance to meet her. She's really all right, Gerald—even if I have had to rub her back every night for months."

BUT the strained atmosphere at the famous corner table was too evident to permit introductions, or even greetings. No one spoke. Even the Sphinx, although flushed with the effort of silence, could only glare. "Don't open your mouths, children," she burst out finally, with an indignant glance at Mr. Broadhead. "Anything you say will be used against you."

Judith's aunt sat there, tight-lipped. Her breathing was an effort, a characteristic of her excitement which started the painful process of trying to remember, in Gerald Prentiss' mind.

"Tell them," demanded Mrs. Thorn-dike Perkins with a gesture at Mr. Broadhead, and then immediately rushed on to tell them herself: "Do you know that every little confidence we have exchanged among friends, as we thought, every little bargain we mentioned picking up, has probably been reported by radio to the United States Customs? Do you know that the stewards and maids and waiters on this boat, not to mention many of the passengers, are nothing but sneaking spies, people who go about betraying confidence and listening at keyholes? So Mr. Broadhead informs us. I don't think we should have been told."

"They were all being so charmingly frank about what they intended to smuggle," said Mr. Broadhead, "that I thought somebody ought to give them a friendly warning."

The Sphinx was not to be pacified. "But you even said that one of us right here at this table was a spy—"

"Oh, no, not quite that," he put in quickly. "I said this ship, all ships, and all the beaten paths of Europe were the hunting ground not only for legitimate government agents but also for the less legitimate, if not despicable, spies and informers who give the bulk of Customs tips for the sake of the standard reward of twenty-five per cent of the fines, duties and proceeds of confiscated goods. They live on it. Imagine a bait like that, thousands on a single tip perhaps. These vultures, men and women—they are called 'spotters' generally—appear in any rôle which will beguile confidence and they encourage their victims to smuggle—"

"But you said—"

Little Mrs. Holton's interruption brought Mr. Broadhead back to the point: "Yes, I said that very probably someone in our small group, those of us right here, is a spotter."

"Well, I assure you all," said Mrs. Holton, "that I for one wouldn't stoop to such a thing if I were starving."

"I should hope not," exploded the Sphinx, almost as if she suspected. "I should hope not, Mrs. Holton—after worming that out of me about my Valenciennes lace nightgowns."

Mrs. Elliott's lips relaxed. "I don't believe in smuggling myself," she said. "If people will do it, let them worry. I have enough trouble with my lumbago."

Gerald Prentiss remembered something about somebody who had no confidence in these foreign doctors. He noticed from the corner of his eye that Judith was (Continued on page 47)

The Lion and the Lamb

By
E. Phillips Oppenheim

The Story Thus Far:

RETURNING from Australia to London, David Newberry finds himself penniless, and his father, Lord Newberry, refuses to help him. To save himself from starvation, he joins a band of criminals, taking an oath never to betray his associates to the police.

David and two others—Reuben Grossett and Cannon Ball Lem—go after the "Virgin's Tear," a valuable diamond belonging to Lady Frankley. In the act of stealing the jewel they are surprised. Reuben and Lem, locking a door to insure their escape, leave David to be captured.

On his release from prison David finds himself Lord Newberry, due to his father's death. He has but one ambition: to avenge his injury. He will not break his oath, but will battle the criminals—alone!

He goes to the gang's headquarters: a filthy room in The Lion and the Lamb, a disreputable public house; boldly confronts the gang's powerful leader, Tottie Green, and makes a declaration of war.

Shortly thereafter, David is attacked in his bedroom at the Milan Court Hotel by several members of the gang. He is given one minute to live—unless he reveals the hiding place of the "Virgin's Tear." All he remembers of the jewel before the police beat him into unconsciousness is holding it in his hand and gazing in surprise at a lovely girl who had somehow slipped into the room. Nevertheless, his life is spared. Then David starts his campaign. He needs a small "army"—jiujitsu experts, not gunmen. Going to a popular gymnasium, he offers the proprietor, one Abbs, £5,000 for the establishment: Abbs accepts.

Very soon an attempt is made to set fire to the gymnasium. Police capture all of the attackers but one, whom David conceals.

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IT WAS at least a quarter of an hour before the man who had been dragged into the gymnasium opened his eyes. He looked about him vaguely. Then he saw David coming towards him, and disagreeable memories began to assert themselves.

"Where am I?" he gasped.

"You are at the present moment," David confided, "in one of the dressing-rooms of the gymnasium you tried to set fire to."

The captured man staggered to his feet, but collapsed into a chair.

"Just my luck to be pinched," he groaned. "What happened to the others?"

"As a matter of fact, Ebben," David said, "you're rather in luck. The others are at the police station by this time. Up to the present you are free."

The young man blinked suspiciously. "What are you getting at?" he growled.

"I'm telling you the truth," was the cool reply. "I saved you from arrest for a reason of my own. I shall very likely hand you over to the police presently. That depends."

"You're not kidding?"

"I am not kidding. Before we called the police in I had you dragged in here out of the way. You can earn your freedom if you want to, or you can go and join your pals, and take a five years' stretch with them."

The young man's teeth chattered.

"What is it you want me to do, guv'nor?" he asked.

David turned on an extra electric light.

"Do you recognize me, Ebben?" he asked.

The man stared for a moment. Then an exclamation broke from his lips.

"Crickey, it's Dave!"

"Yes, that's right," David assented, "and you're Dick Ebben. I know a bit about you, Ebben—a little that you know about, and a little that you don't know about. I know something that Tottie Green doesn't know, or you'd have had yours a year ago."

The young man began to shake silent-

"Miss Sophy!" Dawson exclaimed. "I beg your pardon, my lord—I can't imagine how the young lady got here"

ly. He was very nearly in a paroxysm of fear.

David rose to his feet, unlocked a cupboard, and produced a bottle of brandy. He poured some into a glass.

"Drink this," he enjoined shortly, "and try to listen to me."

The young man clutched at the glass. He drank the contents feverishly in long, appreciative gulps.

"God, that's the stuff!" he muttered, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Get on with it, Dave. I can talk to you now."

"To begin with, then, don't call me Dave," the other ordered. "Our brief association ended twelve months ago."

"I beg your pardon," the young man squirmed. "I don't know what's happened, but I see you're quite the toff now."

"Whatever I am makes no difference to you," David said. "Get this into your head: I know you squealed about the Frankley burglary. I know that I have only to tell Tottie Green just what I do know about you, Dick Ebben, and you'd be a great deal safer in prison for five years."

The young man's fingers and the muscles of his face were twitching.

"So 'elp me, Gawd—"

"Chuck it!" David interrupted. "I know all I want to know about you, Dick Ebben. I can make use of you."

I can save you a knife in your ribs, or five years in prison. Are you ready to listen?"

The young man groveled.

"Dave—Mr. David," he began, "if you keep your mouth shut, there isn't anything I wouldn't do on God's earth. Now, listen—"

"No, listen to me instead," David insisted. "I'll keep you out of this arson case if I can. But you've got to pay."

"What is it you want?" the man gasped.

"You've squealed before for trifles," David continued, "because you're a squealer by nature. Now you're going to squeal for something worth while, but you're going to do it for me."

"FOR you?" Ebben faltered. "Where do you come in with this?"

"I'm out with the gang," David explained. "I'm up against them, Ebben. I'm going to see they get what they deserve. They sold me at Frankley, and they think they can get away with it. They can't. Know what this place is?"

"Some sort of a gymnasium, ain't it?"

"You're not so far from the mark. You might call it a fighting academy, and be done with it. Do you know why you were on an expedition here tonight to burn it down?"

"So 'elp me, Gawd, I don't know!" the young man insisted vehemently. "It was just orders—orders."

He wiped the sweat from his forehead with his coat sleeve. He was alert enough now, recovered with the help of the brandy.

"Listen to me, Da—I beg your pardon, guv'nor," he begged—"the whole show gets me scared blue sometimes. That old man in the chair, the way he looks at me—it's as though he knew. It gives me the shivers! He don't tell me nothing now. Just hands me orders. Gun and knife, fire balls and petrol, same as we burnt down Reinberg's place in Cannon Street with. Two years ago, the old man would have told me all about it—never opened his mouth this time. They got me scared."

David nodded thoughtfully.

"I expect you're right, Ebben," he agreed. "There's something about that old man, Tottie Green, that isn't exactly human—sees into the souls of men, reads the thoughts at the backs of their heads. A nasty business that, you know. Well, you take my advice, Ebben. You're going to get a thousand pounds from me before many weeks are past. The day you touch, you board one of those Glasgow steamers for Montreal."



Illustrated by
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