

THE RED CIRCLE

By Albert Payson Terhune

AUTHOR OF THE "THE FIGHTER," "CALEB CONOVER," "SYRIA FROM THE SADDLE," ETC.
NOVELIZED FROM THE PATHE PHOTO PLAY OF THE SAME NAME BY WILL M. RITCHEY.

SYNOPSIS.

"Circle Jim" Borden, named from a red bird's nest on his hand, has served his third prison term. One in each Borden generation, always a criminal, has borne the Red Circle mark. Jim and his son Ted are the only known living of the Borden. Max Lamar, a detective, is detailed to keep an eye on Jim. June Travis and her mother meet Jim as he is released. Jim and Ted are killed. Next day Lamar sees the Red Circle on a woman's hand outside a certain automobile. June, marked with the Red Circle, robs Grant, a loan shark. Mary, June's nurse, discovers her theft and tells her she is "Circle Jim's" daughter, though Mrs. Travis does not know. Mary tricks Lamar. June, dressed as a boy, receives Mary's coat from the police. Lamar visits "Smiling Sam," Jim's old crime partner. At the seaside June steals war invention plans from Todd Drew and sinks them in the sea with her boy's clothes. Sent to Surftown by Smiling Sam, Alma La Salle paints the Red Circle on her hand and robs the guests at a ball. Mary sees her wash off the mark and points her out to Lamar who follows her back to town.

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT

THE THIRD DEGREE

Far out on the horizon a sloop veered to the wind and bent its graceful sails as if to scoop the crest of a frothy little wave.

Mary and June were sitting on the observation perch of the Travis home, looking out over the beach.

"It's almost deserted," June said with some amusement. "At this hour, any other morning, the beach would be crowded. The dance must have played havoc."

"I think you should have slept longer, too," Mary smoothed back the girl's hair. "A young person like you needs all the sleep she can get."

"Why, I'm as fresh as a daisy," replied June. "If I stay in bed too long I get all stupid and laggard. And, just think how terrible it would be if I had been lazy this morning! That woman in Black would have gotten away safely. As long as I'm a real sleuth now, I can't afford to sleep, overhours, you know."

Mary looked up at the mischievous, smiling face. A shadow of fear crept into her eyes.

"I wish you wouldn't have anything more to do with this," she begged gently. "You are so young, so impulsive. Don't you know if you play with fire you must be burned?"

"But I'm not playing with fire," objected June. "And, besides, don't you see that I've taken out the safest sort of an insurance policy by joining forces with Mr. Lamar in tracking the Red Circle?"

"I don't like it—I don't like anything about it," Mary clasped and unclasped her hands nervously. "You have become so headstrong, dear. Ever since this mark came on your hand, you're so different."

"Oh, look!" June exclaimed, glad of an excuse to change the subject. "Look at the monkey, Mary. Isn't he perfectly adorable? Oh, you're not looking in the right place. He's doing all sorts of tricks. Isn't he wonderful?"

"I think he's an awful looking thing. I'm going into the house. I don't want to look at him any more."

"All right, you go in. I'll stay out here."

June leaned out over the porch rail, keeping her eyes fastened on the organ grinder. Mary watched the girl bite her lips and frowned. The signs were alarming. The old woman looked down at the hand on the rail, with



Started to Cut the Monkey's Rope.

fear and trembling. Her worst suspicions were realized. A faint red J-shaped mark appeared. Mary put out her hand as if to stop its growing more vivid. Slowly the color came into it. It blazed forth in all its strength just as June exclaimed angrily:

"Oh, why does he mistreat that poor, captive animal? A defenseless mite like that! It's outrageous the way he pulls that rope—just look, he's even kicking him! I'm going down there to stop him!"

"You're going to do no such thing! The idea of getting so worked up over a monkey!"

HISTORY WRITTEN IN BLOOD

In the Past, as Now, Assyria Has Been the Theater of Conquest and Slaughter.

A new power, Assyria, had begun to rise above the horizon, and from the lowlands, with occasional intervals of weakness and decline, this power strides like a colossus over the whole of the ancient world, terrifying the nations by its remorseless cruelty, and crushing down all opposition and

"It isn't because it's a monkey. It's because it's heartless cruelty to a dumb animal."

"Anyhow, you're coming right in the house with me."

"No, I'm not."

"Look at your hand," said Mary tersely.

Startled, June obeyed. The Red Circle glared back at her with malevolent intensity. Just for a second her face clouded. Then the same, queer, mischievous smile returned.

"Well, what of it?" she challenged.

"You know," Mary answered, simply. "Come into the house with me before you get into any trouble, dear."

"I don't want to."

"Please, I'm so worried, pet."

"Oh, all right. Only don't look so distressed."

Upstairs, June entered her room and ran to the window. The organ grinder had moved out of sight. A strange, sickening sensation came over her as she thought of him and his treatment of the monkey.

On a little table near the window a small pair of scissors caught the sun and reflected the light, so that it dazzled the eyes. June caught sight of them. She picked them up quickly and slipped them, almost involuntarily into the pocket of her dress. Then she reached for a small sport hat that was lying on a chair and ran out of the room, closing the door behind her.

On the sand, leaning against a pile, under the pier, sat the Italian organ grinder sound asleep—his old, battered organ propped up beside him. The monkey, sitting on his lap, pulled restlessly at his coat.

The man waked stupidly for the fraction of a second, cuffed the monkey over the head, forced him down on his lap again and went back to sleep.

June crept around, under the pier, keeping well behind him until she made sure that he was really asleep—not shamming. Very cautiously she dropped to her knees and crawled toward the organ.

With remarkable rapidity she unbuckled the broad, tough strap that was attached to it and got on her feet. Then she listened to the Italian's loud breathing, before she moved forward quietly until she stood directly behind the pile against which he was leaning.

There was no fear on her face. Only caution and a certain cunning holdness. Stealthily, she slipped the strap around the sleeping man's body, drawing it back behind the pile. She put the eyelet end through the buckle, but did not fasten it. Then she put the scissors on the sand beside her.

Having proceeded so far successfully, she thought for an instant, trying to determine what her next move would be. Picking up the scissors she slipped her right hand around the pile and started to cut the monkey's rope, close to the Italian's hand. The monkey, sensing that a deliverer had come, laid his little face against her hand, softly.

June pushed him back gently. The scissors were dull. The rope was tough. The effort to cut it brought the blood to her hand. Slowly, the Italian blinked his eyes and opened them.

Immediately under his nose was a strong young hand wielding a glittering weapon. Half-conscious, he shuddered inwardly. In his nightmare, someone was working out a vendetta—successfully. His eyes closed. The vividness of the dream was too much for him, however. He opened them again. This time all he could see was a ring of scarlet—an omen of eternal bloodshed.

Stupid with sleep, he made a half attempt to sit erect. On the instant June pulled the strap tight with her left hand, buckled it, seized the monkey with the right and sped off down the beach, the cut rope trailing behind her.

On the edge of the sand, an old woman in black, ghastly pale and petrified with fear, watched her go.

Strapped to the pile, the Italian was kicking up an awful row.

In the distance, June ran into the entrance to Surftown park and found a spot girdled by shrubbery. In the midst of it stood a giant tree with an absurdly thick trunk.

The monkey sniffed affectionately at her chin and raised his little paw. June hugged him up to her, cut the rope close to his collar, and started to take off his ludicrous little hat and coat. All undressed, as he was meant to be, the monkey reverted to type and gazed longingly at an overhanging branch. June looked up at the low-swaying foliage.

"Of course you want to get up there, you poor, ill-treated little beastie," she whispered to him. "That's what I stole you for. To set you free. Say 'thank you' to the lady and shake hands."

She reached up and pulled the branch down to her. Then she waited to see what he would do. With just one regretful look, as though to say, "I'm not ungrateful—but oh, you tree!" he leaped from her arms and

scampered up the tree. On a high branch he sat down and looked at her. June waved her hand.

Back on the beach, Mary watched the struggling Pietro, and tried desperately to decide what the wisest move would be. His awful cries would attract a larger crowd in a few minutes.

It flashed upon her, suddenly, that there was a way of protecting June, even now. With the wrap still on her arm she ran toward the screaming Italian. Indicating that she was going to release him, Mary unbuckled the strap, just as a policeman came running up.

Pietro scrambled to his feet, coking with rage. A torrent of sound poured from his thick oily lips.

"My monk gone—stole—girl—woman—gotta round on hand! Stole! Cut-a-rop! Swipe-a-monk! Beat it!"

Mary stepped forward and spoke to the officer.

"It seems that someone stole his monkey. He's showing you the cut rope in his hand."

The patrolman raised his cap.

"I didn't see you at first, Miss Mary," he said pleasantly. "Yes, I understood that someone had copped the monkey; but what's he getting at, drawing things on the back of his hand and moving his fingers like he was cutting paper?"

"As near as I can make out," Mary answered slowly, "the person who stole the animal cut the rope with scissors and had a mark of some kind on the back of her hand."

"A mark!" the policeman jumped eagerly at the word. "Say, was it a red mark—a Red Circle?" he asked Pietro excitedly.

Seeing that at last someone was beginning to understand, Pietro went back into Italian hysteria. The policeman turned again to Mary.

"You've been on the beach some time, haven't you? Do you remember seeing anyone go past with a monkey?"

"Certainly," the old woman replied promptly. "I remember distinctly seeing a young woman on the beach with a monkey."

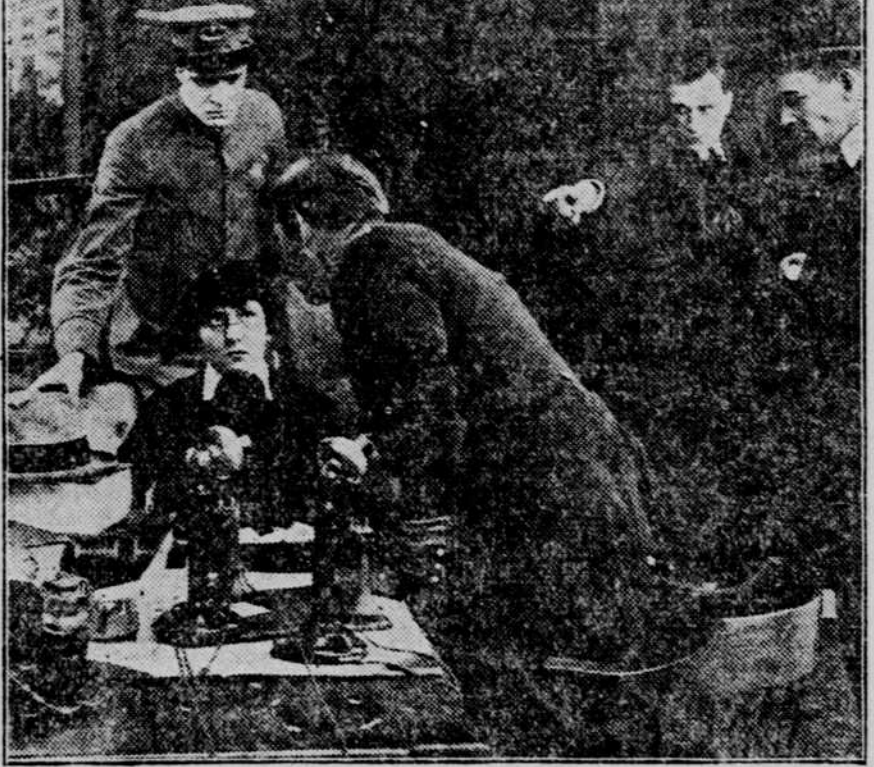
"Do you remember which way she went?" he asked.

Mary, apparently thought deeply for a moment.

"Yes," she said at last, very deliberately, "she went down the beach in that direction."

Her finger pointed directly opposite to the way June had gone.

"Thank you," said the policeman. Motioning to Pietro, he started on



"You Don't Know Anything About Red Circles?"

a run down the sand, the other spectators following closely.

Leaning up against the pillar of the house where "The Woman in Black" lived, Lamar, blowing rings of cigarette smoke skyward, mused:

"I wonder what June is doing. I wonder if she is thinking of me."

His dreams were pleasant. Knowing that his quarry was safe in the house and that she seemed unsuspecting of being trailed, Lamar did not see the use for any extra trick work.

"When in doubt, pump the elevator boy," had always been Lamar's motto. He turned to enter the house. A thick rubber mat, bound in metal, tripped him. He stumbled through the doorway and collided with a woman. Bent over as he was, he couldn't see her face. His gaze fell upon a black leather handbag and a paper parcel that could have contained anything from a picnic lunch to a pair of shoes. Bracing himself against the sides of the entrance he tried to get his balance.

"Perhaps you'll allow me to pass," a cold, sarcastic voice broke in upon his distress.

"Why certainly, madam, certainly," gasped poor Lamar, again threatened with a fall as he tried to be courteous.

Then he raised his face. One look at the dark, slightly aquiline features and he was very erect and very calm.

"On second thoughts," he said calmly, "I don't think I will. You're under arrest."

"Under arrest? Me?" she tossed her head, boldly. "I'd like to see you try to arrest me!"

"You're seeing it now," said Lamar simply.

"Oh, so you think you can bully me into submitting to arrest, do you?"

Just for an instant he flashed a pair of handcuffs by a chain. They clanked ominously as he dropped them back into his pocket.

taste in certain aspects of art, and a tremendous aptitude for organization and discipline, and then imagine such a man imbued with the ruthless spirit of a red Indian brave and an absolute delight in witnessing the most ghastly forms of human suffering, you will have a fairly accurate conception of the ordinary Assyrian, king or commoner: the outside, a splendid specimen of highly developed humanity—the inside a mere ravening tiger.

There is no need to wade through the dreary story of Assyrian con-

"Do you come—or don't you?" he inquired politely.

"Oh, I'll go," she answered after a minute's thought.

Ten minutes later, when she re-delivered, outside the entrance to the police station, she seized her arm and hustled her in, bringing her up before the sergeant's desk.

"Well, Mr. Lamar," said the desk man, leaning over the edge to shake hands, "what can I do for you?"

"I have just arrested this"—this lady on suspicion, sergeant."

"Indeed!" The round-faced, gray-haired officer looked over his glasses, sharply. "Name, please."

The woman raised her eyebrows.

"Name, I said!" thundered the sergeant.

"Oh, I don't know that I have to give it," she said contemptuously.

"Oh, yes you do," Lamar broke in, "a word to the wise, you know. I advise you to make as little trouble as possible. And let me relieve you of your parcel and hand bag."

"La Salle, Alma La Salle," she almost spat the name at the sergeant.

Lamar opened the paper parcel, disclosing a pair of old shoes evidently on their way to the cobbler's to be soled and heeled. He threw them to one side, disappointed. Then with a caustic "May I?" he opened the hand-bag and dumped its contents on the sergeant's desk.

Lamar rapidly searched the mass and found nothing of importance.

"Well, what're you going to do about it?" she inquired with a smile.

"I'm going to have you searched," said Lamar quietly. "Sergeant, will you have someone search Miss La Salle, please?"

The sergeant pressed the buzzer at his right hand. A door in the back of the room opened almost instantly. A portly woman in a blue-and-white striped dress, partly covered with a white apron, stood at the threshold for a second, then came swiftly into the room.

"Mrs. Murphy," said the sergeant, briefly, "will you please search this woman and make your report on what you find?"

"Oh, Mrs. Murphy, would you mind making your report to me in the chief's office?" Lamar called after her.

Lamar entered Chief Allen's office, shook hands and dropped wearily into a chair beside the desk.

"What's up? You look beat out," was the chief's greeting.

"Oh, I'm not beat out," the Crime Specialist squared his shoulders significantly. "I'm not beat out by a

long shot, but I'm up a tree. I phoned you some of the preliminaries of the Red Circle chase—in fact, I told you about them pretty fully over long-distance today. Well, there's a new phase on deck and it's got me going. I have the woman here in the matron's room being searched. I arrested her on suspicion after trailing her from Surftown. I have every reason on God's earth to suspect her; and yet there's a sneaking thought at the back of my brain that I'm not going to get anything on her. I want your help."

"Count on that, all right," said Allen quickly. "What happened down at Surftown, after you phoned me about—?"

"Theft of jewels at the hotel ball? An old woman in hiding, in a big chair, saw this woman rub a red circle on the back of her hand with a wet sponge."

"Here's Mrs. Murphy, now," Lamar got up and went toward the matron eagerly. "Well, what did you find?" The matron shook her head.

"I didn't find a trace of the jewelry you are looking for, Mr. Lamar. The woman had on a cheap gold-plated bangle and an imitation pearl bar pin. There was nothing suspicious about her clothing."

"Didn't I tell you?" Lamar rushed back to the chief's desk under the greatest excitement. "Didn't I tell you that I had a hunch that I wouldn't get anything on this woman? And I know she's guilty. I haven't the slightest doubt about it now."

"Just a minute."

Allen pressed an electric buzzer. His secretary came in from the outer office.

"Please bring me a warrant-to-search blank, Mr. Holt," said the chief. "I want to fill it out. Where did you leave the woman, Mrs. Murphy?"

"I locked her in the detention room, sir."

"That's right. Now will you go back and bring her into this office in five minutes? I'll be ready for her then. What's her name?" he asked Lamar as the matron left the room.

"And her address. I'll send two men over to her home."

He took the blank from his secretary and tried the point of his fountain pen.

"Alma La Salle," he repeated after Lamar, "301 Quincey street." Holt, send Quinn and Mulligan over. Tell them to do a good job—rush it—and beat it back here as quickly as they can."

There was a knock on the door, a few minutes later. It was opened in obedience to the chief's "Come in." Alma stood framed in the doorway, her face still as insolently haughty as when Lamar had first spoken to her.

The chief eyed her steadily. It was a type he knew well. Very difficult to shake in giving testimony, very sharp-tongued. The only salvation lay in getting this woman furiously angry. He had found that rage loosens the tongues of most women.

"Name?" he said before she had a chance to collect herself.

"Oh, you know my name," she answered viciously. "What do you suppose I think you two have been doing in here all this time—having a kaffee klatch?"

Lamar moved forward to intervene, but Allen waved him back.

"I think I can handle this young woman," he said easily. "If I can make her understand, in the first place, that I'll jail her immediately unless she answers my questions straight and as soon as I put them. Name?" he repeated, significantly.

"Alma La Salle."

"I've seen you here before, haven't I?"

"You have not," this very emphatically.

"No? I may be mistaken. I thought I had. What were you doing at Surftown?"

"Wasn't at Surftown. Never heard of the place."

"Well, of course the transfer that you have in your bag, punched 'Surftown,' may be part of a collection. I hardly thought so," drawled Lamar.

"I tell you I've never been there," she maintained with angry persistence.

"Well, we'll let that go as it is," said the chief suavely. "You're an attractive woman, Miss La Salle. How is it that you are not married?"

"Who says I'm not?"

"Oh, so you are. Then why are you living alone in an apartment where you're known as 'Miss La Salle'?"

"Is that anyone's business?"

"I choose to make it mine. How do you get your living, Miss La Salle?"

"From what sort of investments? Bonds—stocks—mortgages?"

"Er—mortgages."

"Ah, the safest sort of an investment—providing they are first mortgages. So that's where your income comes from?"

"You two think you're putting me through the third degree, don't you? Why you're a bunch of amateurs. Make me break down? Lord! You haven't even got my goat!"

"Oh, I think we have that, all right," Lamar remarked with aggravating calm. "Now, I'm going to tell you a few things. We've had you trailed for forty-eight hours. Yes, that gets under the skin, eh? And all we want to know is why you take the trouble to paint red circles on your hand when you operate so cleverly without them. What's the use of doing things that'll help spot you—eh?"

Alma looked at him with an amused smile.

"You may be talking sense," she remarked contemptuously. "But to me it sounds like they'd just let you out of a fat factory."

"You don't know anything about Red Circles?"

"I do not."

The door opened suddenly. Two men, one in uniform, entered and placed a suitcase on the chief's desk. Alma started forward in her chair.

"Yes, it's yours," soothed Lamar. "We won't injure any of your things. We just want to take a look. They've just brought it from your rooms."

Lamar opened the suitcase. He pulled out soft piles of silk lingerie and tossed them on the desk.

"Say, have a heart the way you handle those things," Alma said sharply. "They cost money."

"You bet they do," Lamar answered the command. "Those first mortgages are certainly good to you."

His hand closed on something smooth and cold. He dragged it out from between the folds of an embroidered kimono. It was a paint box! He fumbled as he opened it, because he did not want to take his eyes off Alma's face. He was surprised to find that there was not a quiver of an eyelash.

Once open, he held up the box so the light hit the surface of the little tabs of paint.

"Just as I thought," he exclaimed, gleefully. "Oh, you're not such a clever little Raffles after all, Alma! You see, chief, only the red paint has been used. Wait a minute. I'll find the sponge."

He plunged his hand into the suitcase again and held up the tiny sponge, then bent over Alma solicitously.

"You see, if you'd been really smart," he told her, "you'd have smeared up the other paints too. Then you could say that you were just an amateur artist who went to Surftown to do seascapes."

"Say, you think you're a wonder, don't you?" she scoffed.

Value of Old Violins.

Genuine old violins when in a good state of preservation always command good prices. But the country is flooded with cheap factory-made violins labeled "Stradivarius," etc., which are of no particular value. In 999 cases out of a thousand a violin which is labeled as an "old master," is one of these modern productions, made in Germany or France, and worth only a few dollars. The only way to tell whether a violin has any special value or not is to submit it to some good

violinist—and even then the value is largely a matter of opinion. Such things have no standard market value, and everything depends on finding a purchaser who wants the article and will pay for it. Albert Spalding, the American violinist, has a Guarnerius violin for which he paid over \$20,000, but there are other violins of the same make which would probably not bring a quarter of that, and there are thousands of fiddles with fake "Guarnerius" labels in them which are worth very little.—Pathfinder.

Suddenly the door burst open and slammed back against the wall so that the whole room shook. The sergeant, two old shoes swinging from his left hand, rushed in, his face scarlet with excitement.

"Look at the swag! Look at the swag!" he shouted.

Unclosing his right hand, he dropped a handful of jeweled ornaments on the chief's desk. Alma jumped to her feet. Terror blanched her cheeks. Her eyes were wild. With sudden cunning she

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