

The Red Circle

by Albert Payson Terhune

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

SYNOPSIS.

"Circle Jim" Borden, named from a red birthmark 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, the only known living of the Borden line, are killed. Next day Lamar sees the Red Circle on a woman's hand outside a certain automobile. June, married 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. Lamar visits "Smiling Sam," Jim's old crime partner. Sent to Suriton by Smiling Sam, Alma La Salle robs the guests at a ball. Lamar follows her back to town, captures her with the jewels, and goes after Smiling Sam. On the edge of a cliff pursues and pursued engage in deadly combat. Gordon, a fugitive, rescues Lamar, and June in turn saves Gordon from arrest. Smiling Sam sees the Red Circle on June's hand, tells her he knows her secret and follows her to her city home. She helps Gordon to get away, after recovering for him the securities receipt which incriminates him by tricking Farwell and Lamar. Lamar suspects June. He captures Smiling Sam. Gordon gives himself up. As he tells June his love, Lamar sees the Red Circle on her hand. Eagan betrays June and dies attempting to escape. June is arrested.

FOURTEENTH INSTALLMENT

JUDGMENT DAY

Of course, it was a dream—a vision bred of terror, of suspense, of long-continued nerve strain. At least so June always tried, in later days, to make herself believe.

But she had not been aware of falling asleep. She was sitting there in the squalid little living room of the flat; brooding miserably over the future; and, seemingly, wide awake. Yet, unconsciously, as she sat there, she may have dozed.

For, as clearly as ever in her life she had beheld anything, she saw. "Circle Jim" Borden came into the room.

Mrs. "Circle Jim" Borden, whose mortal body had been lying in the potter's field this many a day.

"June," breathed the wraith's voice, "I am your father—your father, who died. There is no death, save to the body. And I have come back to you. I have come back, because I cannot rest. You alone can give me rest, my daughter."

He paused. And still that strange paralysis held June spellbound.

"I sought to wipe out forever the Red Circle curse. I sought it by ending the lives of those who bore that curse. But I failed. You escaped me."

The voice was tinged with a tender longing as again the wraith spoke:

"June—my little girl, whom I never knew, in life—you must help me. You, and you alone, can aid me now. I cannot rest until the circle is forever gone. While the curse endures, my torture must endure. I long for rest—for eternal sleep. But there can be no rest for the dead while their evil deeds live on. My sins live on in you, poor daughter of mine. And you alone can crush the awful power of the Red Circle and give me rest. Your fate is in your own hands. Not only your fate, but mine. You have the power, if you will but exert it, to save us. You alone. You can give me the rest I crave."

"I was brought up to crime—to recklessness—to the companionship of outcasts," went on Borden. "There were

stupidly into the sternly compelling eyes of his foe.

"Confess!" shouted Gordon.

"Here! What's all this?" demanded someone, in the same breath.

Chief Allen had come in, after heading a squad of policemen who had routed the mob.

Farwell's back was to the door. He had not heard Allen enter, and the chief's words had been drowned in Gordon's threatening shout of "Confess!"

But one of the bystanders laid a detaining hand on the advancing chief's arm, and stopped his progress toward the center of the group. Allen paused a moment, irresolute. And in that moment he heard Gordon repeat:

"Confess your charge against me as a lie!"

Under the blaze of Gordon's hypnotic look, Farwell's nerves went wholly to pieces.

"I—I—" he spluttered.

"Tell the truth!" demanded Gordon, "or I'll drag you by main force out of this club and throw you to the mob of men outside there! The men you've robbed, and who will kill you if they—I—"

"I—I confess!" croaked Farwell, in stark terror. I—

"You confess—what?" insisted Gordon, again shaking his foe back and forth as a puppy might shake a rag.

"I—I confess I 'framed' you," babbled the terrified Farwell. "I—I—the charge I made against you was—was false. I—oh, for God's sake, Gordon!" he howled in abject terror, "don't let those devils out there get hold of me. They'll—"

"One thing more!" broke in Gordon, curtly; his face alight at his victory and at the complete mastery which, for the moment, he was exerting over the panic-stricken man. "One thing more: Will you retract your robbery charge against Miss Travis, and vindicate her? Will you—?"

"Hold on, there!" broke in Chief Allen's peremptory voice. "You're giving a step too far, Mr. Gordon. I didn't butt in, while you made him clear your own name. And I'm mighty glad you were able to. But I can't have you interfering with the Red Circle case. That's a matter for the police. Let it alone! And let Mr. Farwell go."

At sound of the chief's voice, Farwell's vanished courage returned to him with a rush.

"Am I going to withdraw the charge against the Travis girl?" he sneered.

Charles Gordon, in the lounging room of his club, read and reread the flaring headlines that told of June Travis' arrest on the Red Circle charge.

The lawyer was muttering to himself:

"Guilty or not—she saved me from prison. No girl with eyes like hers is a criminal. If—if it wasn't for this damnable embezzlement charge against me, I'd defend her. If only I could get Farwell to admit I'm innocent, I could practice again. And I believe I could clear her. But Farwell would never—"

He glanced up quickly. A man had hurried into the room and was speaking excitedly to a little knot of idlers who sat near the door.

"Well!" Gordon heard the newcomer saying, "I think Silas Farwell has about paid his debt to those employees of his that he's been swindling."

"What's up?" asked Gordon, joining the group.

"I heard this morning that a crowd of them tried to storm his office again, to make him settle. He had a lot of roughneck guards, who scattered them. But just now, as he was coming here from his factory, for lunch, a lot of the strikers mobbed his auto."

"Did they get him? Or—?"

"I don't know. I saw part of the row, from the club steps. It was no affair of mine, to interfere. Let him pay for his crookedness, for all I care. He—"

The speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Farwell himself—hatless, disheveled, panting.

"I—I got clear from them!" hoarsely panted the fugitive, as he dashed into the room and slammed the door behind him.

He was shaking with fear.

Then Gordon, recognizing the value of the psychological moment, leaped forward and seized Farwell by the torn coat lapels.

"Silas Farwell!" thundered Gordon, his face close to the frightened man's.

"Confess that the embezzlement charge you made against me was false! Confess it was a conspiracy—that you lied!"

The onlookers remained outwardly neutral; only pressing closer about the two, as if not wishing to miss a single detail of the scene.

"Confess!" ordered Gordon again.

Farwell, gasping, panting, in utter confusion of mind and body, blinked

stupidly into the sternly compelling eyes of his foe.

"Confess!" shouted Gordon.

"Here! What's all this?" demanded someone, in the same breath.

Chief Allen had come in, after heading a squad of policemen who had routed the mob.

Farwell's back was to the door. He had not heard Allen enter, and the chief's words had been drowned in Gordon's threatening shout of "Confess!"

But one of the bystanders laid a detaining hand on the advancing chief's arm, and stopped his progress toward the center of the group. Allen paused a moment, irresolute. And in that moment he heard Gordon repeat:

"Confess your charge against me as a lie!"

Under the blaze of Gordon's hypnotic look, Farwell's nerves went wholly to pieces.

"I—I—" he spluttered.

"Tell the truth!" demanded Gordon, "or I'll drag you by main force out of this club and throw you to the mob of men outside there! The men you've robbed, and who will kill you if they—I—"

"I—I confess!" croaked Farwell, in stark terror. I—

"You confess—what?" insisted Gordon, again shaking his foe back and forth as a puppy might shake a rag.

"I—I confess I 'framed' you," babbled the terrified Farwell. "I—I—the charge I made against you was—was false. I—oh, for God's sake, Gordon!" he howled in abject terror, "don't let those devils out there get hold of me. They'll—"

"One thing more!" broke in Gordon, curtly; his face alight at his victory and at the complete mastery which, for the moment, he was exerting over the panic-stricken man. "One thing more: Will you retract your robbery charge against Miss Travis, and vindicate her? Will you—?"

"Hold on, there!" broke in Chief Allen's peremptory voice. "You're giving a step too far, Mr. Gordon. I didn't butt in, while you made him clear your own name. And I'm mighty glad you were able to. But I can't have you interfering with the Red Circle case. That's a matter for the police. Let it alone! And let Mr. Farwell go."

At sound of the chief's voice, Farwell's vanished courage returned to him with a rush.

"Am I going to withdraw the charge against the Travis girl?" he sneered.

Charles Gordon, in the lounging room of his club, read and reread the flaring headlines that told of June Travis' arrest on the Red Circle charge.

The lawyer was muttering to himself:

"Guilty or not—she saved me from prison. No girl with eyes like hers is a criminal. If—if it wasn't for this damnable embezzlement charge against me, I'd defend her. If only I could get Farwell to admit I'm innocent, I could practice again. And I believe I could clear her. But Farwell would never—"

He glanced up quickly. A man had hurried into the room and was speaking excitedly to a little knot of idlers who sat near the door.

"Well!" Gordon heard the newcomer saying, "I think Silas Farwell has about paid his debt to those employees of his that he's been swindling."

"What's up?" asked Gordon, joining the group.

"I heard this morning that a crowd of them tried to storm his office again, to make him settle. He had a lot of roughneck guards, who scattered them. But just now, as he was coming here from his factory, for lunch, a lot of the strikers mobbed his auto."

"Did they get him? Or—?"

"I don't know. I saw part of the row, from the club steps. It was no affair of mine, to interfere. Let him pay for his crookedness, for all I care. He—"

The speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Farwell himself—hatless, disheveled, panting.

"I—I got clear from them!" hoarsely panted the fugitive, as he dashed into the room and slammed the door behind him.

He was shaking with fear.

Then Gordon, recognizing the value of the psychological moment, leaped forward and seized Farwell by the torn coat lapels.

"Silas Farwell!" thundered Gordon, his face close to the frightened man's.

"Confess that the embezzlement charge you made against me was false! Confess it was a conspiracy—that you lied!"

The onlookers remained outwardly neutral; only pressing closer about the two, as if not wishing to miss a single detail of the scene.

"Confess!" ordered Gordon again.

Farwell, gasping, panting, in utter confusion of mind and body, blinked

stupidly into the sternly compelling eyes of his foe.

"Confess!" shouted Gordon.

"Here! What's all this?" demanded someone, in the same breath.

Chief Allen had come in, after heading a squad of policemen who had routed the mob.

Farwell's back was to the door. He had not heard Allen enter, and the chief's words had been drowned in Gordon's threatening shout of "Confess!"

But one of the bystanders laid a detaining hand on the advancing chief's arm, and stopped his progress toward the center of the group. Allen paused a moment, irresolute. And in that moment he heard Gordon repeat:

"Confess your charge against me as a lie!"

Under the blaze of Gordon's hypnotic look, Farwell's nerves went wholly to pieces.

"I—I—" he spluttered.

"Tell the truth!" demanded Gordon, "or I'll drag you by main force out of this club and throw you to the mob of men outside there! The men you've robbed, and who will kill you if they—I—"

"I—I confess!" croaked Farwell, in stark terror. I—

"You confess—what?" insisted Gordon, again shaking his foe back and forth as a puppy might shake a rag.

"I—I confess I 'framed' you," babbled the terrified Farwell. "I—I—the charge I made against you was—was false. I—oh, for God's sake, Gordon!" he howled in abject terror, "don't let those devils out there get hold of me. They'll—"

"One thing more!" broke in Gordon, curtly; his face alight at his victory and at the complete mastery which, for the moment, he was exerting over the panic-stricken man. "One thing more: Will you retract your robbery charge against Miss Travis, and vindicate her? Will you—?"

"Hold on, there!" broke in Chief Allen's peremptory voice. "You're giving a step too far, Mr. Gordon. I didn't butt in, while you made him clear your own name. And I'm mighty glad you were able to. But I can't have you interfering with the Red Circle case. That's a matter for the police. Let it alone! And let Mr. Farwell go."

At sound of the chief's voice, Farwell's vanished courage returned to him with a rush.

"Am I going to withdraw the charge against the Travis girl?" he sneered.

Charles Gordon, in the lounging room of his club, read and reread the flaring headlines that told of June Travis' arrest on the Red Circle charge.

The lawyer was muttering to himself:

"Guilty or not—she saved me from prison. No girl with eyes like hers is a criminal. If—if it wasn't for this damnable embezzlement charge against me, I'd defend her. If only I could get Farwell to admit I'm innocent, I could practice again. And I believe I could clear her. But Farwell would never—"

He glanced up quickly. A man had hurried into the room and was speaking excitedly to a little knot of idlers who sat near the door.

"Well!" Gordon heard the newcomer saying, "I think Silas Farwell has about paid his debt to those employees of his that he's been swindling."

"What's up?" asked Gordon, joining the group.

"I heard this morning that a crowd of them tried to storm his office again, to make him settle. He had a lot of roughneck guards, who scattered them. But just now, as he was coming here from his factory, for lunch, a lot of the strikers mobbed his auto."

"Did they get him? Or—?"

"I don't know. I saw part of the row, from the club steps. It was no affair of mine, to interfere. Let him pay for his crookedness, for all I care. He—"

The speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Farwell himself—hatless, disheveled, panting.

"I—I got clear from them!" hoarsely panted the fugitive, as he dashed into the room and slammed the door behind him.

He was shaking with fear.

Then Gordon, recognizing the value of the psychological moment, leaped forward and seized Farwell by the torn coat lapels.

"Silas Farwell!" thundered Gordon, his face close to the frightened man's.

"Confess that the embezzlement charge you made against me was false! Confess it was a conspiracy—that you lied!"

The onlookers remained outwardly neutral; only pressing closer about the two, as if not wishing to miss a single detail of the scene.

"Confess!" ordered Gordon again.

Farwell, gasping, panting, in utter confusion of mind and body, blinked

stupidly into the sternly compelling eyes of his foe.

"Confess!" shouted Gordon.

"Here! What's all this?" demanded someone, in the same breath.

Chief Allen had come in, after heading a squad of policemen who had routed the mob.

Farwell's back was to the door. He had not heard Allen enter, and the chief's words had been drowned in Gordon's threatening shout of "Confess!"

But one of the bystanders laid a detaining hand on the advancing chief's arm, and stopped his progress toward the center of the group. Allen paused a moment, irresolute. And in that moment he heard Gordon repeat:

"Confess your charge against me as a lie!"

Under the blaze of Gordon's hypnotic look, Farwell's nerves went wholly to pieces.

"I—I—" he spluttered.

"Tell the truth!" demanded Gordon, "or I'll drag you by main force out of this club and throw you to the mob of men outside there! The men you've robbed, and who will kill you if they—I—"

"I—I confess!" croaked Farwell, in stark terror. I—

"You confess—what?" insisted Gordon, again shaking his foe back and forth as a puppy might shake a rag.

"I—I confess I 'framed' you," babbled the terrified Farwell. "I—I—the charge I made against you was—was false. I—oh, for God's sake, Gordon!" he howled in abject terror, "don't let those devils out there get hold of me. They'll—"

"One thing more!" broke in Gordon, curtly; his face alight at his victory and at the complete mastery which, for the moment, he was exerting over the panic-stricken man. "One thing more: Will you retract your robbery charge against Miss Travis, and vindicate her? Will you—?"

"Hold on, there!" broke in Chief Allen's peremptory voice. "You're giving a step too far, Mr. Gordon. I didn't butt in, while you made him clear your own name. And I'm mighty glad you were able to. But I can't have you interfering with the Red Circle case. That's a matter for the police. Let it alone! And let Mr. Farwell go."

At sound of the chief's voice, Farwell's vanished courage returned to him with a rush.

"Am I going to withdraw the charge against the Travis girl?" he sneered.

Charles Gordon, in the lounging room of his club, read and reread the flaring headlines that told of June Travis' arrest on the Red Circle charge.

The lawyer was muttering to himself:

"Guilty or not—she saved me from prison. No girl with eyes like hers is a criminal. If—if it wasn't for this damnable embezzlement charge against me, I'd defend her. If only I could get Farwell to admit I'm innocent, I could practice again. And I believe I could clear her. But Farwell would never—"

He glanced up quickly. A man had hurried into the room and was speaking excitedly to a little knot of idlers who sat near the door.

"Well!" Gordon heard the newcomer saying, "I think Silas Farwell has about paid his debt to those employees of his that he's been swindling."

"What's up?" asked Gordon, joining the group.

"I heard this morning that a crowd of them tried to storm his office again, to make him settle. He had a lot of roughneck guards, who scattered them. But just now, as he was coming here from his factory, for lunch, a lot of the strikers mobbed his auto."

"Did they get him? Or—?"

"I don't know. I saw part of the row, from the club steps. It was no affair of mine, to interfere. Let him pay for his crookedness, for all I care. He—"

The speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Farwell himself—hatless, disheveled, panting.

"I—I got clear from them!" hoarsely panted the fugitive, as he dashed into the room and slammed the door behind him.

He was shaking with fear.

Then Gordon, recognizing the value of the psychological moment, leaped forward and seized Farwell by the torn coat lapels.

"Silas Farwell!" thundered Gordon, his face close to the frightened man's.

"Confess that the embezzlement charge you made against me was false! Confess it was a conspiracy—that you lied!"

The onlookers remained outwardly neutral; only pressing closer about the two, as if not wishing to miss a single detail of the scene.

"Confess!" ordered Gordon again.

Farwell, gasping, panting, in utter confusion of mind and body, blinked

stupidly into the sternly compelling eyes of his foe.

"Confess!" shouted Gordon.

"Here! What's all this?" demanded someone, in the same breath.

Chief Allen had come in, after heading a squad of policemen who had routed the mob.

Farwell's back was to the door. He had not heard Allen enter, and the chief's words had been drowned in Gordon's threatening shout of "Confess!"

But one of the bystanders laid a detaining hand on the advancing chief's arm, and stopped his progress toward the center of the group. Allen paused a moment, irresolute. And in that moment he heard Gordon repeat:

"Confess your charge against me as a lie!"

Under the blaze of Gordon's hypnotic look, Farwell's nerves went wholly to pieces.

"I—I—" he spluttered.

"Tell the truth!" demanded Gordon, "or I'll drag you by main force out of this club and throw you to the mob of men outside there! The men you've robbed, and who will kill you if they—I—"

"I—I confess!" croaked Farwell, in stark terror. I—

"You confess—what?" insisted Gordon, again shaking his foe back and forth as a puppy might shake a rag.

"I—I confess I 'framed' you," babbled the terrified Farwell. "I—I—the charge I made against you was—was false. I—oh, for God's sake, Gordon!" he howled in abject terror, "don't let those devils out there get hold of me. They'll—"

"One thing more!" broke in Gordon, curtly; his face alight at his victory and at the complete mastery which, for the moment, he was exerting over the panic-stricken man. "One thing more: Will you retract your robbery charge against Miss Travis, and vindicate her? Will you—?"

"Hold on, there!" broke in Chief Allen's peremptory voice. "You're giving a step too far, Mr. Gordon. I didn't butt in, while you made him clear your own name. And I'm mighty glad you were able to. But I can't have you interfering with the Red Circle case. That's a matter for the police. Let it alone! And let Mr. Farwell go."

At sound of the chief's voice, Farwell's vanished courage returned to him with a rush.

"Am I going to withdraw the charge against the Travis girl?" he sneered.

Charles Gordon, in the lounging room of his club, read and reread the flaring headlines that told of June Travis' arrest on the Red Circle charge.

The lawyer was muttering to himself:

"Guilty or not—she saved me from prison. No girl with eyes like hers is a criminal. If—if it wasn't for this damnable embezzlement charge against me, I'd defend her. If only I could get Farwell to admit I'm innocent, I could practice again. And I believe I could clear her. But Farwell would never—"

He glanced up quickly. A man had hurried into the room and was speaking excitedly to a little knot of idlers who sat near the door.

"Well!" Gordon heard the newcomer saying, "I think Silas Farwell has about paid his debt to those employees of his that he's been swindling."

"What's up?" asked Gordon, joining the group.

"I heard this morning that a crowd of them tried to storm his office again, to make him settle. He had a lot of roughneck guards, who scattered them. But just now, as he was coming here from his factory, for lunch, a lot of the strikers mobbed his auto."

"Did they get him? Or—?"

"I don't know. I saw part of the row, from the club steps. It was no affair of mine, to interfere. Let him pay for his crookedness, for all I care. He—"

The speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Farwell himself—hatless, disheveled, panting.

"I—I got clear from them!" hoarsely panted the fugitive, as he dashed into the room and slammed the door behind him.

He was shaking with fear.

Then Gordon, recognizing the value of the psychological moment, leaped forward and seized Farwell by the torn coat lapels.

"Silas Farwell!" thundered Gordon, his face close to the frightened man's.

"Confess that the embezzlement charge you made against me was false! Confess it was a conspiracy—that you lied!"

The onlookers remained outwardly neutral; only pressing closer about the two, as if not wishing to miss a single detail of the scene.

"Confess!" ordered Gordon again.

Farwell, gasping, panting, in utter confusion of mind and body, blinked

stupidly into the sternly compelling eyes of his foe.