

# THE COPPER HOUSE

A Detective Story

BY

JULIUS REGIS

AUTHOR OF "NO. 13 TORONTO"

Sonia came up to them; she was very pale, but quite composed. The boyish look had vanished, and she answered quietly: "If Mr. Grath is determined to stay, I am afraid he will be obliged to see a good deal both of Rastakov and of Baron Fayerling."

The two women looked expectantly at him. They could hear the hasty steps of the searchers echoing through the whole house. "I should like to know who this Rastakov is, that he takes so much upon himself in a house where my honored guests are staying," said Leo, emphasizing the word "guests"—"neither have I heard anything of Baron Fayerling. But I shall be glad to make the acquaintance of anyone who is good enough to honor the Copper House with his presence."

He was quite aware that his tone was not courteous, in spite of the formality of his speech, but he was thoroughly roused. He could see now, as though a curtain had been drawn back, that these people, whose strange dark faces were stamped with furtive menace, were the mysterious offspring of the lurid shadows of the World War.

He thought of the panic-stricken fugitive whom he had just seen flying for his life, of the shot which had so recently rung through the house; of Lona Ivanovna with the revolver in hand. The frenzied search was still progressing overhead; footsteps and voices echoed through the passages. "Living or dead!" As Rastakov's words recurred to Leo's mind, he was seized with the horrible conviction that murder had been committed already. What ought he to do?

The two women were watching his face as though they longed to read his thoughts. "Your room is quite ready," said the elder one gravely.

Before Leo had decided what to answer, he found himself alone. He began to pace up and down, in great perturbation. He could see one of the men, with his gun, outside on the terrace, silhouetted against the rosy, sunset sky. For the last few minutes, such a silence had fallen, that he could have fancied himself alone in the house. He listened attentively, but could hear nothing. His thoughts circled irresolutely over what had occurred, but he could find no explanation of it, and began to feel more and more uneasy. An hour passed by, the shadows lengthened and still no sound broke the stillness. Was no one coming back?

At last he could bear the suspense no longer, and he went into the hall. He could still see, through the glass doors, the armed sentry on the terrace, but inside the house all was empty and silent. He went from one room to another, and ran upstairs to the first floor, but not a soul did he meet. The thought that the fugitive was perhaps lying dead, huddled away in some dark corner, obsessed him like a nightmare, and his limbs trembled as though with fever. Suddenly a sort of panic came over him, he ran breathlessly up another flight of stairs, burst open the door of his bedroom, and shut it after him with a bang that resounded through the house. Leaning against the door, and alone in the little room, where everything was just as it always had been since his earliest childhood, and where he had dreamed so many boyish dreams, he breathed again.

"Have I gone mad?" he asked himself. "What is going on here? The Problem-

hunter was right, the Copper House is full of mysteries!"

He looked round for some water, for his lips felt parched, but there was none in the room.

"Can they have killed him?" he thought. "And is it possible that I have stood by, without moving a finger, and allowed a man to be done to death!"

At last he heard a door creak outside, and he peeped out into the dusky corridor. The door of the spare bedroom at the other end of the passage was opening slowly, an inch at a time, and he could see first a feeble, bony hand, and then a stooping figure outlined against the window behind.

The figure moved uncertainly, groping with a stick along the edge of the carpet, and walked with short, senile steps towards the stairs. Leo watched him narrowly, trying to get a glimpse of his face; he thought he could make out a short white beard and straggling white hair under a velvet skullcap, and the glimmer of a pair of blue spectacles. A blind man! In an instant he realized that his wealthy tenant, Andrei Bernin, was before him for the first time. The old man seemed to hesitate, and called softly: "Sonia!" but receiving no answer, he finally went towards the staircase, tapping with his stick at every step. Leo could hear his quavering voice calling to Lona Ivanovna, the sound getting fainter as it receded. There was something so eerie about those feeble tones, uttered in the silent, lonely house at nightfall, that the young man, with a shudder, shut himself into his room again. After a minute he double-locked the door, and went over to the open window. The sky had faded to sulphur-yellow in the west, and night was closing in, cool and dim, over the countryside. A soft breeze was blowing in from the sea. He heard the crunching of gravel under his window, and leaned out. Two figures passed beneath, one of whom pointed upwards, and said something in an imperious tone. Leo fancied he recognized Rastakov's voice.

They knew, then, that he was in his bedroom, and they were keeping an eye on him! The conviction awakened fresh misgivings. He sat down on the bed, and buried his head in his hands. Was he afraid? Yes, he had to confess that he was afraid, because there was nobody within reach in whom he could confide, or whom he could ask for advice.... The Problem-hunter! He sprang to his feet.

Five minutes later, he had climbed down the thick, clumsy copper butter spout, with the same soundless agility, and the same intense excitement as had characterized such escapades 20 years ago. He expected to be halted by a challenge from the shadowy avenue, but none came, and the owner of Copper House crept away like a Red Indian through the trees into the wood. Three times he caught a glimpse of the dark forms of the men whom Sonia Bernin called forestguards, but, lucky for once, he did not attract their notice. When he turned round, he could see in the far distance, behind the top of the massive pile of the Copper House, a flickering, bluish glimmer, which seemed to come from the direction of the Bay. He did not venture to delay that he might investigate the source of this unusual light.

When he swung himself aboard the last train to Stockholm, which was already moving out of Karkby, he was

in Uruguay; 23,000 in Chile; and 13,000 in Peru. In what the institute terms "Oceania," or the islands of the Pacific, 27,657 Italians were accounted for, of whom approximately 27,000 were settled in Australia.

France, according to the same statistics, drew most of the Italians emigrating to European countries, there being 967,593 across the Alpine border. Next in attraction was Switzerland, which harbored 135,942. Great Britain's share was 29,430; Germany's 21,205; Austria's 18,700; Belgium's 15,700; and Jugo-

gasping for breath, and drenched with perspiration.

## CHAPTER VI

The Problem-Hunter

It was past midnight, when a young man, evidently dead-tired, and looking thoroughly exhausted, entered the office of the night editor of the Daily Courier, and asked to see Maurice Wallion. The night editor, a somewhat callous personage, looked at him without any special interest.

"Wallion?" he answered dryly. "He's not here."

"Where can I find him?"

"That's more than I can tell you—we haven't seen him ourselves! There is just one chance in a thousand that he's at home, but if he is, he doesn't answer the telephone, anyway—I have tried! He won't be best pleased when he sees how his office here has been turned upside down."

"Upside down?"

"That's putting it mildly. You might tell him, if you find him, that his room looks as though a squad of small hurricanes had been performing war-dances in it, and that nobody knows how or when. Here's his address, if you really feel you want the exercise of a night ramble from here to Valhalla Road."

The editor pushed a scrap of paper into Leo's hand, and showed him out with a police, though rather suggestive, zeal. The young man stood for a while in the deserted street, to collect his thoughts. He also turned up his coat collar, for the keen air made him shiver after his exertions in the wood; and with a gesture of undaunted resolution, he started on his pilgrimage through the shadowy wilderness of stone, beneath the rows of extinguished street lamps.

Women accosted him with inviting glances and alluring voices; and knots of revelers passed him with discordant bursts of laughter; further on, a policeman with his hands behind him, stood gazing after him.

These shadows, appearing and vanishing in the mists of night, recalled the events of the last few hours, as did the glaring, owl-like orbs of the clock tower, and he hastened his steps, breaking into an occasional run.

When he at last reached the broad, lonely Valalla road, past the stadium and the barracks, his clothes were clinging to him, and he was quite out of breath. It now occurred to him for the first time, that the outer door of the block of flats, in one of which the Problem-hunter lived, would probably be locked, but when he arrived there, he saw that it was partly open, and, without stopping to consider the reason for this, he ran quickly up the stairs....

He came to a standstill before the folding doors which bore a brass plate with the name of Maurice Wallion. One of the doors stood ajar, and on the stone floor of the lobby were scattered several splinters of white wood. He heard the stairs creaking on the next landing, as though someone were making his escape that way, startled by his unexpected arrival. All was dark in front of him, but he pushed the door open and stepped over the threshold.

A hand hovered about his head like a swooping hawk and seized him by the neck. The owner of the hand came out from behind the door, and a strong voice said mockingly in his ear: "Come along in, young fellow! No, don't struggle, I've been waiting for you impatiently. I can't say you are much of a hand at forcing a Yale lock, it has taken you the best part of half an hour—and now—glad to see you, take a seat!"

With what seemed to Leo superhuman strength, he was lifted up and flung headlong into a corner, where he fell on to a heap of something soft, clothes evidently. The electric light was turned on with a click, and he saw bending over

slavia's 14,329, the latter figure not including Italians of Yugoslav citizenship.

In Asia Minor the Italians had a sizeable colony of 5,305 in Turkey, but only 156 in Syria. In Asia proper they numbered only 913 in China. In Africa, outside Italy's own colonial possessions, there were 97,000 in the French protectorate of Tunisia, 49,106 in Egypt, 28,528 in Algeria and 10,412 in Morocco.

A resume of the figures showed that there were 9,188,367 Italians resident outside the kingdom and

him a tall man shooting costume. A pair of keen gray eyes, that sparkled with energy and humor, were peering down at him, and Leo guessed instinctively who this must be.

"Good morning, Mr. Wallion," he said. "Pleased to meet you...."

"It's you, is it?" answered the Problem-hunter, without seeming in the least taken aback. "Why are you sitting there?"

Leo got up.

"I was under the impression that there was an earthquake just as I came in, but perhaps I was mistaken!"

"It was I who was mistaken, my dear Mr. Grath. One of Baron Fayerling's aides-de-camp has been playing about with the lock of my door for the last half hour, and I have been standing behind the door waiting—naturally they thought I was out—and just as he was on the point of getting in, you interrupted him, and fell into my trap instead...."

The Problem-hunter broke off, and sprang to the door, but at the same instant, they heard a terrific clattering down the stairs, and the outer door at the bottom was banged to.

"He had evidently no wish to wait, when he knew that I was at home," remarked Wallion. "I must really beg your pardon for the very rough reception I gave you just now. The blackguard, he has quite ruined this lock; however, that's easily remedied—just a minute, and then we shall be able to have our little chat in comfort."

As he spoke, he was quickly and deftly screwing a strong bolt on the door.

"There, that will do. Now, will you come this way?"

They went into the study, and Wallion lighted a lamp with a yellow shade, that stood upon his writing table.

"Of course, you are very much surprised at my knowing you again," inquired Wallion, looking with interest, though not disconcertingly so, at his belated visitor, whilst he brought out the ingredients for a refreshing drink of "Johnnie Walker" and soda, fetched cigars, and drew the curtains.

"You see, I got to know what you looked like as much as three months ago...."

"That didn't surprise me so much," said Leo, who felt quite revived, as he glanced round him at the comfortable room, with its bookshelves and tables. "But how on earth did you know that I was coming to Stockholm? Not two months ago, I hadn't an idea of it myself!"

"A sudden fancy, I suppose?"

"Yes, something put it into my mind, I don't know exactly what...."

"And the minute you get back, you find yourself in a whirlpool of the most extraordinary events?"

"Extraordinary hardly expresses them!"

Maurice Wallion smiled, and sat down opposite Leo.

"I am afraid I owe you another apology," said he. "So you don't exactly know why you came to Stockholm? I can tell you—it was to help me. Yes, I know, you will say that you were not even aware of my existence, until you got my letter in Burchard's office. No matter. I knew that you were in Los Angeles, where you were not required, and that you ought to be in Stockholm, where you were not expected. If I had written direct to you, and asked you to come, you would certainly have treated it as a joke, especially as I could have given you no reasonable explanation—just then."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

### SYNTHETIC RUBBER

Salt Lake City.—A bed of about 2,000 acres of bitumen has been discovered beneath the waters of the Great Salt Lake. It is a black, viscous molasses like liquid, and when cleared of its impurities and combined with reclaimed rubber, forms an excellent substitute for hard rubber in the use of battery boxes, switches, etc.

Of these 7,674,583 were in the two Americas; 1,267,841 in Europe; 188,703 in Africa; 27,657 in Oceania, and 9,374 in Asia. Taking the population of the mother country at roughly 41,000,000, that means that there are about 50,000,000 Italians in the world.

### Needn't Wait

From the Pathfinder.

Mistress to new maid.—As you are not familiar with our rules, I thought I would tell you that we have breakfast at 8.

Maid.—Thanks. But don't wait for me if I'm not down in time.

### Issues of "Self-Government"

From Omaha World-Herald.

The Wayne Herald wants to know why The World-Herald, favoring the prohibition of the use of explosives in Omaha on the Fourth of July except under strict regulation as to where and how, is not equally enthusiastic over federal prohibition of intoxicating beverages. It is a fair question and deserves a fair answer.

For Omaha to establish a safe and sane Fourth would be a legitimate exercise of "local option"—the right of local self government. If Wayne should prefer a noisier and more demonstrative celebration we should be perfectly willing for it to assert and enjoy that privilege. Just as there are many men of many minds, so there are many communities with different ideas and customs. We should be content if each followed its natural bent, though we might venture to reason with Wayne for its own good, that Omaha's way was better. But we should not favor authorizing the federal government at Washington to compel Wayne and all other communities to conform to their local customs and habits and affairs according to what Omaha thought was best.

In other words, while we try desperately to be modern and keep up with the hurrying times, we are still old fashioned enough really to believe in the wisdom of the Jeffersonian theory. To our mind it is rooted in human nature. Wayne people, the majority faction and the minority faction alike, will submit to their own decision as to whether they shall permit fireworks to be exploded in their streets. They will not so readily submit to a ukase from Washington, saying that Wayne must do thus and so because, for example, that is the way New Yorkers do.

There are noticeable differences, too, between fireworks and fire-works. Anybody can make wine or beer or alcohol. It is one of the simplest and easiest of natural processes. Anyone who wants to can have a winery or a brewery or a distillery in his home. That is what makes federal prohibition, at any rate, so unpopular. It is not true of fire-works. They don't grow in the garden or in the field; they have to be manufactured by a technical process, out of materials not home grown, that must also be manufactured.

The World-Herald is quite as much in favor of temperance, in the use of stimulants as in all other things, as the Wayne Herald. It is quite as much opposed to drunkenness, and to the beating of wives and the starving of children. The only real difference between us is that the Wayne Herald believes federal prohibition to be a satisfactory solution of the problem at issue, and The World-Herald has its grave doubts, just as Woodrow Wilson and Chief Justice Taft had before the audacious "experiment noble in motive" was attempted.

### Secret Police

From New York Times.

When Police Commissioner Whalen had completed his plans for organizing a secret squad in the department he called in the reporters and gave them a column of news about it. This is only fair play to the crooks who are this particular squad's objective. Fifty men, as if New York City were pre-war Russia are to be recruited to join gangs and secretly report on crime to a secret commander. If the plan had not been outlined in advance by the commissioner he could have been accused by his quarry of unfair tactics. Now the warning has scrupulously been given, and any gang which accidentally takes a policeman into its fold will have only itself to blame. Let no racketeer, from his place in the Tombs, tell us through the tabloids hereafter that "the commissioner is playing it low down." He will have no sympathy from this generation of readers of detective stories.

How often has Holmes sent a message from Baker street to the scoundrel he was pursuing that he would capture the miscreant at exactly 12 of the clock in a hollow room in Hounslow Heath! And Arsene Lupin, on the side of the evildoers, has he not always notified the police in advance of his criminal intentions? Commissioner Whalen does not propose to be outdone. It is a delicate task he has set for himself in organizing this bureau of criminal investigation. The mystery-story writers would find their ingenuity taxed if such an organization were essential to one of their plots.

Charlie Chan, inspector of the Honolulu police, is a smooth worker, but he would have hard work in finding 50 secret places to meet his 50 secret men and hear their 50 secret verbal reports. Colonel Grenville of the British intelligence was able to solve the mystery of the Six Proud Walkers, but he toiled alone. If 50 assistants, known only to him by numbers and unknown to one another, had been constantly springing out at him from old walls and ruined posadas, he would never have caught the wicked doctor. But Mr. Whalen and the secret commander of the 50 are not daunted by the limitations of fiction. A peculiar wattle from a bush; a curious dropping of the left eye in passing—and they will know that they are face to face with one of the 50. But when Officer Flannigan, the neighborhood traffic cop, vanishes from his post and later is seen in another part of the city whispering to "an officer higher than a captain," how shall his identity and that of his commander be kept secret? It is a delicate task, but the commissioner is as equal to it as to many duties more routine.

Q. What was the ratio of marriage and divorce 40 years ago? What is it now? J. A. C.

A. The ratio of divorces to marriages in 1887 was 1 divorce to each 14 marriages. The ratio at present is 1 divorce to every 7.5 marriages.

TUG DISJOINTS CITY TRAFFIC CHICAGO—(AP)—A blundering sand barge in the Chicago river dislodged the old Clark street bridge and threw traffic in the "loop" into a two-weeks tangle. Rather than pay the \$50,000 necessary to repair the bridge the city re-routed traffic. The old bridge was being replaced by a new one when the accident occurred.

Q. Why can an electric spark be produced by touching a piece of steel after strenuous exercise? J. K.

A. The bureau of standards says that this is merely static electricity produced by friction.

## It May Be Urgent



## When your Children Cry for It

Castoria is a comfort when Baby is fretful. No sooner taken than the little one is at ease. If restless, a few drops soon bring contentment. No harm done, for Castoria is a baby remedy, meant for babies. Perfectly safe to give the youngest infant; you have the doctors' word for that! It is a vegetable product and you could use it every day. But it's in an emergency that Castoria means most. Some night when constipation must be relieved—or colic pains—or other suffering. Never be without it; some mothers keep an extra bottle unopened, to make sure there will always be Castoria in the house. It is effective for older children, too; read the book that comes with it.

Fletcher's CASTORIA

### Practical Result

The Doctor—They say practice makes perfect.

The Lawyer—Well, Doc, I think you and I both prefer having ours make us rich.—Cincinnati Enquirer.



## When Food Sours

Lots of folks who think they have "indigestion" have only an acid condition which could be corrected in five or ten minutes. An effective anti-acid like Phillips Milk of Magnesia soon restores digestion to normal.

Phillips does away with all that sourness and gas right after meals. It prevents the distress so apt to occur two hours after eating. What a pleasant preparation to take! And how good it is for the system! Unlike a burning dose of soda—which is but temporary relief at best—Phillips Milk of Magnesia neutralizes many times its volume in acid.

Next time a hearty meal, or too rich a diet has brought on the least discomfort, try—

PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia

### Need Them

"Mamma, why do elephants have such big trunks?"

"Well, they have to come all way from India."

## TOOK ADVICE OF HER MOTHER

Praises Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Wetmore, Colo.—"When I was married 14 years ago I was in bad health for a couple of years and when I tried to do anything I would get tired and worn-out. I have taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound off and on all these years and have recommended it to hundreds of women. I have given birth to six children and have taken the Vegetable Compound as a tonic before child birth. It has done me worlds of good. My mother had taken it several times and she recommended it to me."—Mrs. JOHN BRASSE, Wetmore, Colorado.



## North and South America Attract Italian Emigrants

ROME—(AP)—There were 3,706,116 Italians resident in the United States at the beginning of the second half of 1927, the Central Statistical Institute here computes; after having gone through all consular reports. In Canada, the institute estimates, there were a rough 200,000.

For South America the figures were: 1,839,579 Italians in Brazil; 1,797,000 in the Argentine; 65,000