

# A LIFE FOR SALE

BY SYDNEY HORLER

"The police?" echoed the dwarf.

Margery felt a trifle more hopeful. Zoab at last was evincing interest.

"Yes, I could not understand myself why a man who was undoubtedly a criminal should talk of the police. But he assured me that any information he sent to Scotland Yard would receive very careful attention. Preposterous as it sounded, his manner was so impressive that I was convinced against my common sense. I was terrified for my father, as you may imagine."

She paused again, but this time her listener kept silent. Zoab had become abstracted and apparently indifferent again.

"That night," she went on nervously, "whilst I was in Lord Belshaven's study, the young man Creighton ran a great risk for me. How he had learned of my danger I do not know, but in order to save me he took suspicion upon himself. Fortunately, he escaped . . . and that is why I do not want any harm to come to him." She looked at the dwarf pleadingly as she concluded, but was not able to gain reassurance.

Instead the answer Zoab made caused her to give a terrified cry.

"Creighton is a criminal himself—he is wanted by the police for the murder of a man named Sir Simon Baste."

Margery was unable to stop the scream that rose to her lips.

"He didn't do it! He couldn't have done it!" she protested vehemently.

Zoab did not take his eyes from her face.

"I am afraid you were not telling me the entire truth, Miss Steers, when you imply that you had no particular affection for this young man. It is not on a dangerous murderer that I would like you to waste so much thought."

With a fresh fear Margery realized that she had allowed her senses to overcome her. Irretrievably, perhaps, she had blundered.

Before she could frame any words Zoab had gone on. His voice, previously so gentle when addressing her, was now harsh and jarring.

"So that you may forget this foolishness, Miss Steers, I am going to make a statement to you," he said. "By profession I am a bacteriologist. At this moment I am on the eve of making a tremendous discovery. It is necessary for this work that a human being should be inoculated with my new disease germ. In certain countries—England, unfortunately, lags behind in this respect—the suggestion is being seriously considered of condemning criminals being handed over to such men as myself, in the interests of medical science. In any case, the lives of such wretches are already forfeit on account of their crimes, and in the last few weeks of their existence they may be able to pay back in generous measure the debt they owe to humanity. Now with regard to this young man Creighton—"

Margery Steers screamed for the second time.

"He is here, I knew it! And you, you fiend, you would do this awful thing! O God, help me!"

"Miss Steers—"

What the dwarf was about to say she did not wait to hear. In that moment of terrible vision an idea had been born in her half-crazed brain.

"Listen! I will make a bargain with you, devil though you are. If you will give me your solemn assurance that Martin Creighton can leave

the castle to-night unharmed, I will—marry you. . . . To-night, if you wish."

For several moments the man to whom she had made the offer stood silent.

"You must love this young man very much, Miss Steers," Zoab said.

"Yes. I didn't realize it before, but I—do."

"And you hate me?"

"Don't ask me! Don't ask me! But I will marry you. . . ."

The dwarf stepped back. "To you, Miss Steers, I am the meanest man, most contemptible creature living," he said, "but even Zoab—Zoab the dwarf—has his pride. I cannot accept your offer."

When Margery lifted her head the room was empty.

## CHAPTER XXXII

Once again Creighton was back in the room with the white tiles. His wrists and ankles were still bound. And watching him with what seemed a morbid interest was the man who had threatened him with such a dreadful death.

Zoab now spoke.

"The greatest poet who ever lived, my young friend, once said:

"All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players.

Probably there never has been a stranger last act than that in this little play of ours."

"Cut out the talk, Zoab," curly answered Creighton.

The dwarf lifted those beautifully shaped hands of his in a little gesture of hopelessness.

"Talk!" he echoed. "Talk!" He took one look at the instruments strewn about the glass bench at which he was seated, and then turned to Creighton with fresh energy.

"Before I submit you to a small operation," he said. "I have a story to tell. Because not only you, but Miss Steers—"

"Leave Miss Steers out of it, you dog!"

Zoab accepted the epithet with resignation.

"That is impossible," he said; "but you need have no fear, Mr. Creighton, that I shall be disrespectful. Miss Steers is the only living person for whom I have ever felt affection."

In spite of himself, Creighton was hushed into silence. The strange note in the speaker's voice commanded attention.

"I must represent a grotesque rival to you," went on the dwarf, "but, like you, I fell in love with Miss Steers. It is not necessary for me to tell you about my early life; I need only say that in a world which has always openly showed its contempt and hatred of me, Miss Steers appeared as an angel of beauty and graciousness.

"It was madness for a person like myself to have any thought about her, I know, but this madness overcame me. So I took her out of the house of Juhl and brought her here. Incautiously, perhaps, I mentioned your name to her. Almost immediately I knew that she loved you. She loves you to such extent that she offered to make, for your sake the greatest possible sacrifice: if I consented to let you escape from the castle unharmed she promised to marry me—to-night, if I wished."

Creighton was so shaken that he could not speak when the dwarf paused.

"I know what you are thinking," Zoab continued; "you are shuddering at the

possibility of a beautiful human flower like Margery Steers being married to such a I. But that once cherished dream is now dispelled. I refused her offer."

"Thank God!" Creighton could now speak.

Zoab did not show that he had heard, but continued in that grave, even-toned voice, which was so peculiarly impressive.

"Once I realized the truth—the truth being that I remained the most repulsive thing on earth to Miss Steers—I had to refuse her offer. That is not to say," he went on, "that I considered myself obliged to let you leave this place unharmed."

"I don't care a damn about myself," declared Creighton; "and, look here, you can't do things like you talk about in England. Miss Steers is the private secretary of Lord Belshaven, one of the most influential politicians in the country. He will be moving heaven and earth to find out where she has gone."

The dwarf wavered his hand in a half contemptuous movement.

"We will come back to you," he rejoined, with a note of finality.

"When you were last in this room," the speaker added, "I gave you the information that I intended to inoculate you with my new disease germ. I still intend to do so. Although the only chance of happiness I have ever dreamt of has been completely shattered, I remain, I trust, an honorable man. I promised to perfect this new disease germ, and in fairness to my employers I must do so. You are necessary to my further research work. Being already a criminal wanted for murder, perhaps you will reconcile yourself to dying in my laboratory instead of on the scaffold."

"Why not get on with it?" Creighton endeavored to be sardonic, but his body felt cold. The story which the dwarf had just told him, bizarre and incredible as it had sounded, he had been bound to believe owing to the simple sincerity of the speaker.

But that Margery Steers should love him! . . . Anger that he should know it just before being condemned to a foul death!

"You ask me to commence," said Zoab, stretching an arm over the glass bench. "Very well; I will. . . ."

Martin Creighton watched what followed as though he were dreaming this horror instead of living it. Zoab approached him and removed his collar and necktie. Then he unfastened his shirt at the neck. . . .

Going back to his glass bench, he picked up a hypodermic syringe which he had previously filled from a test-tube containing a vivid green fluid.

"We will start with a moderately powerful dose," he heard Zoab say; and then, with the dwarf standing so near him that he could feel his breath upon his cheek, Martin Creighton did the one unpardonable thing for a self-respecting man.

He fainted.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

Juhl frowned.

"You will stay here," he said in an authoritative voice. The strikingly beautiful girl, who had been his companion in crime for the last two years, showed dazzling white teeth in a defiant smile.

"On the contrary," she replied, "I intend to go with you. You talk of danger, but have I ever shown you any sign of fear?"

"No. But this is no affair for a girl." Juhl stopped in his walk, to look at her closely. "Are you hoping that that fool Creighton will be at Wildwood?" he asked, with an angry snarl.

"Well?" The girl stamped a foot, whilst the color flamed into her cheeks.

The Colossus did not reply

for some moments. When he spoke his words cut the air like the vicious swish of a sword.

"You are the only woman I have ever really wanted in my life," he said, "and do you think that I am going to allow you to throw yourself away on this stupid youth? You seem to forget, moreover, that the Hangman has an appointment with him."

The girl snapped the fingers of her right hand. In that moment she might have been a tigress at bay.

"For so big a man, my friend Juhl, you are surprisingly foolish," she told him in turn. "Do you think that I do not know who killed Sir Simon Baste? And do you think that I am so afraid of The King that I will not tell the truth? Even if the rope were already round Martin Creighton's neck I would save him."

Her companion looked round, as though afraid of an unseen listener.

"You don't realize what you are saying, Xavia," he replied in an undertone that carried fear; "if The King had the least suspicion about you, he would—"

"Psst!" She snapped her white fingers again. "Have I not already told you I do not care that for The King? He may terrify you, Juhl, but he cannot frighten me. I go now to rest for an hour. At the end of that time I shall prepare to accompany you to Wildwood Castle. You say the girl Steers is there—I want to have another talk with her."

Before Juhl could reply she had left the room. The Colossus, lighting a cigar, flung his huge frame into an enormous leather chair and blew cloud after cloud of smoke. His nerves badly wanted soothing.

His mind was fully occupied with Xavia. A man who knew the entire civilized world, a man who had tasted life to the full, Juhl found himself possessed of an almost insane jealousy. What he had told Xavia was true; compared with his desire for her every other feeling he had had for a woman was significant. He had waited so long, had waited with a patience which, to such a man was marvelous. For two years he had thought continuously of his reward, and now Xavia calmly told him that the man she wanted was not himself but that fellow Creighton. . . .

Juhl's mind went back to a night in Paris two years before. He had been supping at Maxim's, in that noble thoroughfare the Rue Royale, when Flossie Covinger, the American blackmail specialist, had come excitedly to his table.

"Oscar," she said breathlessly, "would you like to meet a very beautiful girl? From what I can make out she may be useful to you."

Oscar Juhl had always been a master of beautiful women and not a slave, but the words naturally enough aroused his interest.

"Of course, Flossie," he replied; "bring her along."

Directly he saw the girl he knew her to be a personality. Although only twenty years of age, she had the composed assurance and perfect poise of a cosmopolitan woman of the world. After Flossie Covinger had made the introduction, Xavia had turned to him and said: "I want five minutes with you alone."

Flossie had taken the hint in characteristic good humor—when not working on one of her blackmail schemes she was a generous soul—and had taken her departure.

The opening words of his companion caused Juhl to stare.

### (TO BE CONTINUED)

#### Not the Eggs.

From Tl-Bits.

A waiter was having a trying time with a facetious customer.

"Waiter!" shouted the customer. "What on earth is wrong with these eggs?"

"I don't know," retorted the waiter. "I only laid the table."

to the United States with his wife in 1882. She is now dead.

He smokes many cigarettes every day and is as active as most men half his age. He has carried a cane, however, and limped a bit since he was struck by an automobile two years ago.

His friends and neighbors make a gala day of his birthday every May 29, presenting him fruit, cakes, candy and cigarettes in generous quantities.

There are approximately 1,000 establishments in the Netherlands making wooden shoes.

# HOMING

By Helen Walshaw

THEY who know adventure,  
Green stars, ships, wine seas,  
Have their beer heart-hungry,  
For such things as these:

ONE house, small and laughing,  
Halfway down a hill,  
Fire-bright in the gloaming—  
Women always will

WANT a twilight shelter,  
And one man who comes  
Homeward, never heeding  
Fanfare and the drums.

THERE are many heavens—  
I've known one or two,  
I've been up a spiny road  
When the world was new.

AND I've learned that gypsies,  
Whose prisms go astray  
Under flame and slippers  
Through the vagrant day,

NEVER stroll in darkness—  
Always with the night.  
They go seeking shelter,  
Love and candlelight.



## The End of an Ill-Starred Adventure

From The St. Louis Post Dispatch.

When the armed forces of the United States leave Nicaragua at the close of this year, it will be the end of an ill-starred adventure. Not more so, perhaps, than the similar adventure we have had in Haiti but certainly; sorry enough to warrant hope that nothing of the sort shall happen again in American history.

The extravagance of government and the plight to which taxpayers have been reduced by public waste have no better example than the case of Nicaragua. The American investment in that country, as of January 1, 1932, was \$15,648,700. The cost of maintaining American marines there from 1927 to the end of this year, when they will be withdrawn, is estimated at Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington at \$6,076,034. This estimate, rendered in response to a request from Congressman Cochrane, is over and above what it would have cost to maintain the marines in this country.

Thus, to safeguard a \$15,000,000 investment, we have spent in five years some \$6,000,000, or two-fifths of the whole investment. If we did all our foreign financing at that ratio, the more than 15 billion dollars which America has invested abroad would cost the taxpayers in excess of a billion a year.

The Nicaraguan adventure reduced dollar diplomacy to an absurdity. We first paid \$3,000,000 for the right to build a canal across Nicaragua. When American bankers moved to finance the country's development, we offered this canal right as a reason for sending our armed forces to protect these investments. At one time we lent the Nicaraguan government \$1,000,000 to put down insurrection. We were ourselves the cause of insurrection, and have been ever since, as long ago as 1909, we entered upon the policy of civilizing Nicaragua "with a Krag."

The outcome has been farcical. We were never able to subdue Sandino, who declared that he would fight as long as our armed forces remained on Nicaraguan soil. We undertook to give the country fair elections, and the last one resulted in elevating to the presidency the very man we had for six years kept out of power by force.

The relations between the United States and Nicaragua from this time on ought to be those of two civilized nations. American investors in that country should enjoy the protection of Nicaragua, just as they expect to enjoy the protection of every other country into which they venture. To follow our investments with our armed forces and try to make them good is impracticable. The story of Nicaragua proves it.

We have not the least doubt that Nicaragua will respect our treaty rights, including the right to build a canal across the country when we get ready to do it. We have in the end given ourselves the best possible assurance that Nicaragua will respect our rights by respecting hers.

### KREUGER AND ANATOLE FRANCE

From the Living Age

Two auctions, one of Ivar Kreuger's art collection and the other of Anatole France's, have revealed that the Swedish match king had a better affair for authentic old masters than for authentic stock certificates whereas the aesthetic Frenchman was more astute in the accumulation of money than in the selection of masterpieces.

Figures tell the story. The Kreuger collection brought about \$12,000 and the pictures of Anatole France only about \$12,000.

The features of the Kreuger Collection included Courbet's "Self-Portrait with a Violin," which commanded the top price of 20,000 crowns, Raeburn's "Portrait of a Man," purchased for Mrs. Morehead wife of the American ambassador to Sweden, a Ruysdael landscape, Tintoretto's "Papal Ambassador," Rodin's statue of a man walking, and a Gobelin tapestry of Venus calling upon Neptune to save Telemachus.

The Anatole France auction was the result of a fiasco. During the

war France had asked to have his picture collection, in which he took great pride, given safe keeping in

Touraine, and when he died he willed it, through his wife, to the city of Paris. But when it was discovered that the pictures were almost all copies the city refused the collection, which was offered for sale at the Hotel Drouot.

### Old Cemetery Delays Road Reconstruction

Jackson, Mich. — (UP)— Reconstruction of Sutton Road east of here will be held up indefinitely because the new excavations revealed a forgotten cemetery more than 100 years old, located along the right of way.

Tombstones bearing the date 1831, as well as several skeletons, were found by workmen. Assistant Prosecutor Owen Dudley said the road work could not proceed until formal vacation proceedings have been carried through the courts.

Pioneer residents said they did not recall a cemetery at that location.

paid a small honorarium when they attend meetings. The humorous speculation is on everyone's lips as to whether the royal exile needs the few francs he is entitled to receive as an active Academician.

"I'm one of the unemployed," Alfonso told an associate, "and after this I'll gladly attend the sessions."

Since his hasty departure from Madrid, he has been living in Paris and at Fontainebleau.

Members of the Academy are

### Public Lands Yield

#### 4 Million for Year

Washington — (UP)— Total receipts from sales, leases and other disposition of public lands during the fiscal year 1932 were \$4,065,010.76. C. C. Moore, Commissioner of the General Land Office, said in his report for that year to Secretary of the Interior Wilbur.

Original public land entries for the year embraced 4,551,774 acres, or 50,000 in excess of the annual average for the past 10 years, Moore said. Homestead laws ac-

counted for almost 90 per cent of the areas in new segregations and more than 75 per cent of those patented.

A total of 6,049,905 acres of public lands were placed in a state of reservation, and 3,619,457 restored to entry or other disposition. The remaining public domain was reported as 173,318,246 acres, of which 133,984,529 were surveyed.

### MAY CLEAR NILE

Uganda, Africa, now is formulating extensive plans to completely rid the Nile of its sudd, large

floating islands of vegetation that have seriously obstructed traffic in this river for many centuries.

### Veteran Keeps House; And Earns Own Living

Garden City, Kan. — (UP)— Toper, 103-year-old veteran of five wars, keeps house for himself here and earns a living selling souvenir pictures.

He was born in Russia and fought in the Russian army during the Crimean war 78 years ago and four other conflicts. He came