

THE MAN OF THE TWO FACES

BY TOM GALLON

My mysterious friend, Enoch Voyce, had, as you have already been made aware, introduced me to Scotland Yard, and although in my previous experience with Inspector Clair I had not quite come up to that astute officer's expectations, he appeared still to have faith in me. I have no doubt that you will remember that extraordinary affair at High-lane. I need not go into it here. Although, as I say, I had not really been of assistance to Inspector Clair on that occasion, yet the time came when he sought me out again; and that, too, for work of a similar kind.

I was doing some retouching in my studio one morning, when the Inspector came in, accompanied by Enoch Voyce. He had evidently sought out the main first. After that preliminary delay and that talk concerning ordinary matters, both of which seemed essential to some men, the Inspector approached the object of his visit. And once again it happened that he had been sent for from the country.

"It may prove to be only a question of finger marks," Mr. Hattenbury," he began, "or it may prove to be something more. I can't exactly say at the moment, but I certainly want your help. It's a goodish way, but I don't suppose you mind that."

I eagerly assured him that I was prepared to go anywhere, and begged that he would give me some idea of what the case was on this occasion.

"It's a little matter of arson," said Inspector Clair, looking frowningly into the fire before which he sat. "Figure to yourself a highly respectable town, of highly respectable inhabitants, sort of place where every one goes to bed at ten or half past, and where a concert or a mild and innocent 'top' is the greatest relaxation known. The view down with the clock tower is practically unknown, and at the assizes white gloves are as common as constables.

"There you have, I think, a pretty accurate description of Brimford Market, in the county of Shropshire."

"And the arson?" asked Voyce, looking at him quizzically.

"It is as mysterious as it is frequent," replied the Inspector, pursing up his lips. "The institution or that is found to be ablaze; a somewhat old-fashioned fire engine turns out, too late to save it. A night or two later a farm outside the town is set alight in three or four places. There's no hope for that at all. This person or that has seen the incendiary, accounts differ, and yet seem to point to one particular man. In a word the thing has become so serious and so many properties have been attacked that it becomes vitally necessary something should be done. Now you know the reason why I want you to go with me to Brimford Market, in the county of Shropshire. It should prove to be an easy matter," added the Inspector, pulling thoughtfully at his beard—"a very easy matter indeed."

We traveled down to Brimford Market that day, and I think it was the dullest, most highly respectable looking town I have ever encountered.

It was as clean as the proverbial new pin, and the houses faced on to the broad street, with their winking brass knockers and brass plates and spotless doorsteps; most of them had green shutters to the windows, turned back by day against the walls. There was a market cross, dating back three or four hundred years, and there was a town hall that had been renovated, and there was a public library that was too new to need renovating, and there was, of course, a bank.

I mention the bank particularly, because it concerns this story. It was a square building, standing in the center of the town, and when not referred to simply as "the bank," was spoken of by strangers as "Ortman's bank." When we arrived, the bank was almost the first place to which we were introduced, because its proprietors—a certain Mr. Ortman—was the man most keenly interested in the mysterious fires which had been taking place. He appeared to be rather a shifty light in the place, and was, indeed, at that time its mayor.

He was, I think, one of the most remarkable looking men I have ever seen. I should mention, especially having regard for his name, that he was of remote foreign extraction; in any case the type of face was a curious one. He had a high, decidedly intellectual looking forehead, clear-cut profile, with a firm mouth and chin, dark hair, brushed straight off the temples and forehead, and the brightest eyes I have ever seen in a human face. They were remarkable eyes, in that they seemed specially to sparkle and flash as the man spoke. There was about them quite a magnetic quality. For the rest, he looked the prosperous citizen of a provincial town; well dressed and well mannered, and evidently used to dealing with men. As he was strongly interested in the cases concerning which Inspector Clair had been summoned.

"It is a serious matter for us—for the town of which I am the chief magistrate," he said. "No property is safe; in one case already the lives of two innocent persons have been sacrificed. Our town police appear to be helpless. No reward that we have offered has induced any one to come forward to give evidence. Yet that the cases are the acts of an incendiary is perfectly clear."

I noticed one curious thing, while Mr. Nicholas Ortman talked—his face worked excitedly and his eyes blazed, quite in the manner of a man to whom this was a personal offense. Nor was that the most remarkable thing. Looking at him in the strong light in which he sat, I saw that his face was a perfect network of lines and wrinkles, marking him, on that nearer view, appear much older than I had supposed him to be. I have seen the face of an old person with just such lines—a face the skin of which might have been, to my fancy, at least, capable of fitting a larger frame than it covered. The thought occurred to me then, in looking at him; it was dismissed a moment later.

Guided by the chief constable of the town, we went to the scene of the latest outrage—a school. Mr. Nicholas Ortman, alike in his capacity as mayor and as a private individual who might some day suffer himself in like fashion, accompanied us. I remember that the circumstances were the more pathetic in that the two little children of the caretaker of the place had perished in the flames. There had been no opportunity for getting them out, or they had been forgotten in the excitement. At this distance of time I forget exactly which was the reason.

Inspector Clair made various observations—looking for a footprint here, and cursing the stupidity of the local police there, where something had been disturbed; but I could see that he was baffled. Moreover, there was a small chance that any photograph of finger marks or footprints would be of use; a hundred hands had touched the windows and the doorways; dozens of feet had wandered over the soft earth round about the ruin of the school house, and not one was distinguishable from another. The only real evidence that we could get at all was that the fire had broken out in three different spots; the flames had been seen to break out in those three places at the same time.

One witness was brought forward—that broken, weeping creature, the caretaker of the school, whose little children had been sacrificed. He was a big, burly man, with honest written all over him. It was his own sheer madness to suggest for a moment that this man had anything to do with the fire, but he was able to throw some light upon the identity of the incendiary.

He had seen a man, with a cap drawn about his face, and clad in an old and shabby overcoat, hanging about near the school. He had not liked the looks of the man and had pointed him out to his wife. The man had nothing about him which he could be identified—at least, facially—save a very remarkable pair of eyes—blazing eyes, wide open and staring. The face had, so far as they could see, a swollen appearance and the lips hanging loosely; altogether the face of a madman. Neither the

man nor his wife had ever seen this suspicious character about the town before, and they knew most people who lived in it. More than that, the man himself, on the first alarm in the dead watches of the night, had looked out and had seen some one in a cap and a shabby overcoat running away.

I obediently photographed things I was told to photograph, and then, sadly enough, we came away from the place, accompanied by Inspector Clair and the mayor—Mr. Nicholas Ortman. The latter, in particular, seemed much upset. He referred again and again to the fires and to the necessity for discovering, if possible, the identity of the incendiary. Walking thus down the High street of Brimford Market, we stopped naturally enough before the bank, and there Mr. Ortman, also quite naturally, asked us in. We went through the outer office and into his private room.

It was a bitterly cold day. There was an east wind blowing, I remember, and yet there was no fire in that room. The grate was empty. It did not appear to have had a fire lighted in it for years. Perhaps by our looks or our actions we innocently betrayed what was in our minds, for our friend offered an explanation.

"I have a horror of fire—a dread of it," he said. "It dates from the time when I was badly frightened by my clothing catching fire as a child. Fortunately," he added, with a smile, "I am a lonely man, and, therefore, my particular case does not affect other people; but you will find no fire in my house. I clothe myself warmly, big, that is all. When, of course, I say there are no fires I expect the kitchen and the servants' quarters; but I will not have them about me."

I noticed that subject affected him so much that he was trembling; his white hands fluttered nervously. I saw, too, that Enoch Voyce was watching him curiously and evidently forming some opinion regarding him. We talked of various matters for some half an hour, and Inspector Clair ponderously laid down the law regarding arson and its penalties. Then we left, Enoch and I, with the Inspector, were staying at a comfortable hotel not 200 yards from the bank.

It must have been between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning that I awakened with the knowledge that a hand had me in its grip and was gently shaking my shoulder. I started up to find myself face to face with Enoch Voyce. He was fully dressed, and he held a lighted candle in his hand.

"Get up, Rattenbury," he said, "and dress yourself. There's some light in the sky outside the town." It did not take me five minutes to get into my clothes and to find myself standing in the deserted and silent High street with Enoch Voyce outside the inn. Only then did I remember the Inspector, and breathed his name to my companion. Enoch uttered a contemptuous exclamation and suggested that the Inspector would be better for full night's rest. Then we set off at a great rate, guided always by that glare in the distance.

Our way took us naturally past the bank. So far as we could tell the alarm had not yet been given and the town was as silent as a graveyard. But in the bank, we hurried past, we saw a light burning in a downstairs room. It was in the bank itself, by it understood, but in the house adjoining, which formed part of the building and which was, in reality, the private residence of Nicholas Ortman.

Enoch Voyce stopped and caught my arm. "We'll go no farther," he whispered. "We'll wait here."

I started a remonstrance, but the old man took no notice of me. I own I was considerably surprised when he crossed the road and rang the bell of the house. After a moment or two a neat man servant, dressed for all the world as though the time had been 9 or 10 at night instead of 3 o'clock in the morning, answered the summons. I remembered to have seen the man before, when we had called with Ortman at the bank, on our way back from the fire at the schoolhouse.

In the most casual fashion, Enoch Voyce said that he wanted to see Mr. Ortman. The man hesitated and then admitted that his master was out, but would be back shortly. There was no disguise about his manner, nor did he appear to think it strange that we should call at such an hour. Enoch said that we would wait, as the matter was pressing, and we were shown again into that room into which Nicholas Ortman had himself ushered us.

There was one window in the room, giving on to the black darkness outside; there were books and papers about and a writing table and some chairs and a couch. There was a heavy bookcase standing against one wall—a deep, old-fashioned thing, reaching from floor to ceiling. I was still at a loss to understand what we were waiting for, or why we had not proceeded straight to the fire; but I knew enough about Enoch Voyce by that time to guess that he had lighted upon some clue, and that I should presently be enlightened myself. And sure enough, even while we stood in the room in which the servant had left us we heard suddenly a sound that seemed to beat in upon the stillness of the night.

A sound of running—racing feet—that tore down be-



Suddenly, I saw against it—clearly and horribly—a face staring into the room—a face with wild eyes, staring wide open, with loose, hanging lips over the grinning mouth—a face red and swollen and distorted.

side the house as though of one not pursued. Even as the sound broke in upon the silence of the night Enoch Voyce slipped behind the end of the bookcase and motioned frantically to me to get out of sight. Scarcely knowing what I did, I dropped to my knees behind the heavy desk and opened round it at the window. That window was uncurtained.

Suddenly, I saw against it—clearly and horribly—a face staring into the room—a face with wild eyes, staring wide open, with loose, hanging lips over the grinning mouth—a face red and swollen and distorted. Only for an instant did it stare like that into the room, to be photographed indelibly in my mind; then it was gone, and I found myself, shaking and trembling, looking into the eyes of Enoch Voyce.

"The man who fired the schoolhouse?" I whispered. "What does he do here?"

We heard a great murmur of voices and the sound of many feet. It came on like a rushing, roaring tide. Evidently on this occasion the incendiary had been caught at his work, and the pursuit had followed hot foot. That it was belated was certain, because some minutes had already passed since that face had grinned in upon us at the window. But now it came thundering at the doors of the house. We could hear the shouting of the mob, the screaming of women, and the impatient thundering at the door. Yet the curious thing was that no attempt seemed to be made to open the door.

The crowd, irresolute, had drifted away, and still we stood there, waiting. Then quite calmly the door of the room was opened, and we saw, standing in the doorway, Nicholas Ortman. It was obvious that he had just been aroused from sleep; he was clad in a dressing gown, and he looked at us in some surprise. Behind him, in the doorway, stood the servant who had admitted us.

"Gentlemen, I am truly sorry," said Ortman, in his gentle voice. "A most regrettable blunder on the part of Spicer. He seems to have had an impression that I had some out, instead of which he found me in bed, and told me that two gentlemen were waiting to see me. There seems to be a great tumult in the streets. Is anything wrong?"

The man looked startled and a little white, that was all. He was the courteous gentleman we had met before, and it was obvious that he had been roused somewhat unceremoniously at an absurd hour.

Briefly enough, Enoch Voyce told him of the fire, which had apparently occurred outside the town; of the mob that had thundered at the doors of the bank. Ortman looked round him in a dazed fashion, looked at his servant, and then back at us. He did not seem to understand that it was possible that another fire had occurred in so short a space of time. Even as he looked about him, and seemed about to speak, we heard the mob returning, and heard again the imperious summons upon the door.

"Then it wasn't a dream," he said, with a smile.

"There was a noise in the streets, after all! Spicer, open the door!"

The man ran to the door and opened it, and a flood of people came in in a state of great excitement. The first of them was a big, burly man, with the look of a farmer about him. He marched straight up to Ortman and faced him.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," he said, in a loud tone, "so we've tracked our man at last! He's given us a run for it, but, by heaven, we've got him! There's those that have seen him run up the lane here beside the house, and there's no way out. Have you seen nothing?"

"The man—the incendiary—here?" The face of Nicholas Ortman was a face of bewilderment. "What should he do here? You've seen nothing, gentlemen?" he added. "Nothing at all," said Enoch Voyce. And I wondered why he said that, remembering the face at the window.

Some of the crowd strayed round the house, and we saw their faces peering in at the window. Just as we had seen that other face; but they found nothing. How the creature had got away it was impossible to suggest. Some of those in the crowd began to doubt it, after all, they had not been misinformed, and had allowed the man to slip through their fingers in some other direction. Finally they melted away, with apologies, until only the big farmer was left, and it seemed that many of his ricks had been burnt, and part of his house. Finally he, too, took his departure, and our host saw us off the premises, and probably went himself back to bed. As we walked away in the direction of the inn, I put a question to Enoch Voyce.

"Why do you say that we had seen nothing?" I asked. "Because, my dear Rattenbury, I don't want to blundering country fools interfering in this," snapped Voyce. "The man, whoever he was, is in that house, and he is being shielded by Ortman. The thing is as plain as a pikestaff. How else do you account for the fact of the servant waiting up fully dressed, the master who hears nothing, and yet comes down from his bed and talks about dreams? I understand exactly what it is. Poor Ortman has a skeleton in his cupboard—some crazy wretch who gets beyond his control at times. And that crazy wretch we have to find. The remarkable thing is that the servant Spicer is in the business, though I don't quite understand how. However, on the next occasion we'll nab our man, and for the sake of appearances, we'll take the Inspector with us. Besides, in dealing with a madman—for that's what the incendiary invariably is—we shall need three people, at least."

We had to wait three days for our opportunity, and Inspector Clair began to grow impatient. On the third night, however, Enoch Voyce woke us both, and again there was the glare in the sky, though this time it was nearer. To the Inspector's bewilderment, we set out, running hard for the bank, and there again was the light in the lower room. The hour was about the same. This time, however, our procedure was different, for no sooner were

we in the place, having been admitted again by the servant, than Voyce and I flung ourselves upon the man, and securely bound and gagged him. Inspector Clair, now fully alive to the game, lent a hand. After the gagging of the servant, we went carefully all over the house, searched every room of it, and found no one. Nicholas Ortman was evidently not in the house. Whether or not the unfortunate man had gone out in search of the creature he protected it was impossible to say. We found, however, a door in the lower part of the house unfastened. That Enoch Voyce bolted and barred. Then we left everything quite naturally to him—he went with us into the room in which we had previously waited, and unfastened the window, putting it up at the bottom a couple of inches, that done, we left the light burning, and concealed ourselves in the room.

We heard again the running feet of the man, though on this occasion he was not pursued; we saw again that horrible, distorted face at the window. We saw it disappear, and heard the soft rattling of the handle of the door. Baffled, the creature came back again. Then the window was raised, and the man sprang into the room, closed the window, and fastened it. Looking round about him for a moment, just as we made ready to spring, he suddenly took of his cap and overcoat, and tossed them under the couch, threw himself upon the couch, and dropped asleep in a moment.

We crept forward and looked at him as he lay there. There was no need to hurry; we were three to one, and could have thrown ourselves upon him the moment he stirred. Looking down at the swollen face, with the veins starting out of it as though they would burst, the hanging lips, the general coarseness of it, something curious seemed to strike us all. We bent nearer.

The face was changing! Even as we looked, the coarseness was smoothed away, the swollen blood vessels subsided, the loose lips grew firm and refined and straight. Where the skin had seemed to swell almost to bursting, it took on a mass of lines and wrinkles. It became white and delicate, and showed a clean-cut profile. The face of Nicholas Ortman! The whole thing took some fifteen or twenty minutes, and then before us lay the other man, sleeping calmly.

We woke him as we bound him, and he made no struggle after the first minute or two. It was certain that the unfortunate man knew nothing of his horrible night excursions when he had regained his own same self by day; the two creatures lived apart, save that they inhabited the same body. The man Spicer, weeping and imploring his pardon, was brought in, and completed the story; told how he had watched his master steal out night after night, and come back and change into his normal self.

Poor Nicholas Ortman has been well cared for since, and it is not in his power to do further harm now. His name has almost faded out of the minds of the good people of Brimford Market.

NEARLY A HEART BREAK. . . By Wallace Mason.

THE river was a stream of moving life. Gay voices rang in a silver challenge across the crowded waters. Mingling with them was the sound of strident instruments and minstrel songs. "It was the last day of the regatta." "Well, everything must have its appointed end—even the regatta," said Arneston, a little sentimentally. "The girl, who was seated by his side on the boat, looked at him with a strange light in her deep brown eyes. "Shall you be sorry?" she asked in a sweet, rich voice. "Yes, I shall be sorry," he answered simply. "I thought I'd grown altogether tired of the river. It's about the tenth year running I've been here. But my interest in it has revived. I shall remember this regatta as long as I live."

Arneston gazed at her in blank amazement. "Eight years ago I had a friend whom I loved as I should have loved my mother and had become a little weary of them all. And then all at once it was just as if I had walked out of gloom into eternal sunshine. These last three days are the most perfect my life has ever known." "That sounds as if you were in love," she said, smiling. "I was alone on the deck of that boat." "It is love," he said, "and it is you I love." There was sudden silence between them. She did not move, but her attitude became a little rigid, her smile died. "I cannot marry you," she said at last. "I care for you as I have never cared for any other woman." "My refusal will pain you, then. I am glad, because it is my wish to pain you."

"That man was yourself. Those letters were signed by you. It was you who killed this woman." "I see." The words were spoken dutifully, without any feeling whatever. "When I first met you," she continued. "I saw a woman cast away behind that I attracted you. I resolved to do all in my power to make you care for me seriously. I wanted you to say what you had said tonight, that you loved me, that I might tell you this story, and give you that as my answer." "A kind of revenge? Well, at any rate, Miss Basset, you have made me go through a severe quarter of an hour. As for my defense, well, I will not trouble with that." He raised his hat and turned away. Miss Basset watched him until the shadows swallowed his form up. "I don't feel at all as I expected," she said to herself in dismay. "I thought I should glow with satisfaction. What a weak fool I am. If I hadn't told myself all day long and half the night what caused I had to hate him, I should have loved him."

Everybody noticed how quiet and pale Miss Basset was at supper, and many wondered what had become of Arneston. When she reached her own little bedroom in the Glow-worm she found a letter waiting for her. Two or three newspaper cuttings fluttered out of it. She read the brief note: "You will see that the enclosed cuttings exonerate me from the brutality you were good enough to place to my credit. I should have undecieved you at the time, but it was plain to me that you had merely pretended to like me—when

I had hoped that you—well, something different." Miss Basset read the clippings with wondering eyes. They briefly related police court proceedings which Arneston had brought against an impudent scoundrel who had passed himself off under that name with the purpose of obtaining credit. Miss Basset went back to the city by an early train the following morning. She had hoped to be alone, but just as the train was on the move the door was opened hastily and Arneston jumped in. "I followed you shamelessly," he said. "I've come to ask again what I asked you last night. My pride was terribly hurt. But I love you too much to do anything in the world part us, and in spite of all, I believe you care for me, too."

"I believe I do," was Miss Basset's meek reply.