

THE LONG ARM OF UNCLE SAM

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MANY OF THE MAJOR OPERATIONS OF THE WORLD WAR HAVE NEVER BEEN WRITTEN—MANY OF THEM HAVE NEVER EVEN BEEN HINTED AT—FOR THE REASON THAT THEY WERE UNDERTAKEN BY THE SECRET OPERATIVES OF THE DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS A FORCE INCLUDING HUNDREDS OF MEN AND WOMEN HAS BEEN WORKING DAY AND NIGHT, ROUNDING UP THE ENEMIES WITHIN—JUST AS THE GOVERNMENT AGENTS ARE ALWAYS KEPT BUSY BY THE FORCES OF THE UNDERWORLD WHO CONSIDER UNCLE SAM FAIR PREY. SMUGGLERS, COUNTERFEITERS, MAIL THIEVES AND MOONSHINERS NEVER APPEAR TO TIRE OF TRYING TO GET MONEY WITHOUT WORKING FOR IT.

BUT UNCLE SAM'S ARM IS LONG AND HIS MEMORY RETENTIVE. SOONER OR LATER HE NAILS THE MAN WHO BREAKS HIS LAWS, THOUGH IT OFTEN ENTAILS MONTHS OF WORK AND FEATS OF DETECTIVE GENIUS WHICH FAR OUTSTRIP THOSE OF FICTION.

THOUGH WRITTEN IN NARRATIVE FORM, THE ARTICLES IN THIS SERIES ARE ALL BASED ON FACT—FACTS, IN MANY CASES, AVAILABLE ONLY SINCE THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES. NAMES AND LOCATIONS HAVE HAD TO BE ALTERED, BUT A FULL REPORT OF EACH CASE WOULD BE FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS IF THEY WERE THROWN OPEN TO PUBLIC INSPECTION, FOR THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE INSTANCES IN WHICH THE LONG ARM OF UNCLE SAM HAS REACHED TO SEIZE THE MEN WHO BREAK HIS LAWS.

VIII.—The Taxicab Tangle

WEDNESDAY had been sitting on the front porch—Bill Quinn and I—discussing things in general for about half an hour when the subject of transportation cropped up and, as a collateral idea, my mind jumped to taxicabs, for the reason that the former Secret Service operative had promised to give me the details of a case which he referred to as "The Trenton Taxicab Tangle."

"Yes," he replied, reminiscingly, when I reminded him of the alliterative title and inquired to what it might refer, "that was one of the branch cases which grew out of the Von Ewald case—you remember Mary McNeill and the clue of Shelf 457. Well, Dick Walters, the man who handled Von Ewald, wasn't the only Government detective working on that case in New York—not by some forty-five or fifty—and Mary wasn't the only pretty woman mixed up in it, either. There was that girl at the Rennow switchboard."

That's another story, though. What you want is the taxicab case."

If you remember the incidents which led up to the Von Ewald affair—continued Quinn, as he settled comfortably back in his chair—you will recall that the German was the slipperiest of slippery customers. When Walters stumbled on his trail, through the quick wit of Mary McNeill, there wasn't the slightest indication that there was such a man. He was a myth, a burlesque—elusive as the buzz of a mosquito around your ear.

During the months they scoured New York in search for him, a number of other cases developed. Some of these led to very interesting conclusions, but the majority, as usual, delivered into thin air.

The men at headquarters, the very cream of the Government services gathered from all parts of the country, were naturally unable to separate the wheat from the chaff in advance. Night after night they went out on wild-goose chases and sometimes they spent weeks in following a promising lead—to find only blue sky and peaceful scenery at the end of it.

Alan Whitney, who had put in two or three years rounding up counterfeiters for the Service and who had been transferred to the Post Inspection Service at the time of those registered mail robberies in the Middle West—only to be detailed to Secret Service work in connection with the Von Ewald case—was one of the bitterest opponents of this forced inaction.

"I don't mind trouble," Whitney would growl, "but I do hate this eternal strain of racing around every time the bell goes off and then finding that some benighted punk of a man for the sheer joy of seeing the engine come down the street. There ought to be a law against irresponsible people sending in groundless tips—just as there's a law against scandal or libel or any other information that's not founded on fact."

But, just the same, Al would dig into every new clue with as much interest and energy as the rest of the boys—for there's always the thrill of thinking that the tip you're working on may be the right one after all.

A Case For Whitney.

Whitney was in the office one morning when the phone rang and the Chief answered it.

"Yes," he heard the Chief say, "this is the right place—but if your information is really important I would suggest that you come down and give it in person. Telephones are not the most reliable instruments in the world."

A pause followed and the Chief's voice again.

"Well, of course we are always very glad to receive information that tends to throw any light on those matters, but I must confess that yours sounds a little vague and far-fetched. Maybe the people in the taxi merely wanted to find a quiet place to talk. They got out and were away for nearly two hours? Hum—thanks very much. I'll send one of our boys over to talk to you about it, if you don't mind. What's the address?"

A moment or two later, after the Chief had replaced the receiver, he called out to Whitney and with a smile that he could barely conceal told him to catch the next train to Trenton where, at a certain address, he would find a Miss Vera Norton, who possessed—or thought she possessed—information which would be of value to the Government in running down the people responsible for recent bomb outrages and munition plant explosions.

"What's the idea, Chief?" inquired Al.

"This young lady—at least her voice sounded young over the phone—says that she got home late from a party last night. She couldn't sleep because she was all jacked up from dancing or something, so she sat near her window which looks out upon a vacant lot on the corner. Along about two o'clock a taxicab came putt-putting up the street, stopped at the corner, and two men carrying black bags hopped out. The taxicab remained there until nearly four o'clock—3:48, Miss Norton's watch said—and then the two men came back, without the bags, jumped in and rolled off. That's all she knows or, at least, all she told."

"When she picked up the paper 'round 11 o'clock this mornin' the first thing that caught her eye was the attempt to blow up the powder plant 'bout two miles from the Norton home. One paragraph of the story stated that fragments of a black bag had been picked up near the scene of the explosion, which only wrecked one of the outbuildings, and the young lady leaped to the conclusion that her two night-owls were mixed up in the affair. 'So she called up to tip us off and get her name in history. Better run over and talk to her. There might be something to the information after all.'"

Off To Trenton.

"Yes, there might," muttered Whitney, "but it's getting so nowadays that if you walk down the street with a purple tie on, when someone thinks you ought to be wearing a green one, they want you arrested as a spy. Confound these amateurs, anyhow! I'm a married man, Chief; why don't you send Giles or one of the bachelors on this?"

"For just that reason," was the reply. "Giles or one of the others would probably be impressed by the Norton's girl's blonde hair if he must be blonde from the way she talked—and spend entirely too much time running the whole thing to earth. Go on over and get back as soon as you can. We can't afford to overlook anything these days—neither can we afford to waste too much time on harvesting crops of goat feathers. Beat it!"

And Whitney, still protesting, made his way to the tube and was lucky enough to catch a Trenton train just about to pull out of the station.

Miss Vera Norton, he found, was a blonde—and an extremely pretty one, at that. Moreover, she appeared to have more sense than the Chief had given her credit for. After Whitney had talked to her for a few minutes he admitted to himself that it was just as well that Giles hadn't tackled the case—he might never have come back to New York and Trenton isn't a big enough place for a Secret Service man to hide in safety, even when lured by a pair of extremely attractive gray-blue eyes.

Apart from her physical charms, however, Whitney was forced to the conclusion that what she had seen was too sketchy to form anything that could be termed a real clue.

"No," she stated, in reply to a question as to whether she could identify the men in the taxi, "it was too dark to tell for me to do that. The arc light on the corner, however, gave me the impression that they were of medium height and rather thick-set. Both of them were dressed in dark suits of some kind and each carried a black leather bag. That's what made me think that maybe they were mixed up in that explosion last night."

"What kind of bags were they?"

"Gladstones, I believe you call them. Those bags that are flat on the bottom and then slant upward and lock at the top."

"How long was the taxi there?"

"I don't know just when it did arrive, for I didn't look at my watch then, but it left at twelve minutes to four. I was getting mighty sleepy, but I determined to see how long it would stay in one place, for it costs money to hire a car by the hour—even one of those Green-and-White taxis."

"Oh, it was a Green-and-White, eh?"

An Important Clue.

"Yes, and I got the number, too," Miss Norton's voice fairly thrilled with the enthusiasm of her detective ability. After the men had gotten out of the car I remembered that my opera glasses were on the bureau and I used them to get a look at the machine. I couldn't see anything of the chauffeur beyond the fact that he was hunched down on the front seat, apparently asleep, and the men came back in such a hurry that I didn't have time to get a good look at them through the glasses."

"But the number?" Whitney reminded her.

"I've got it right here," was the reply, as the young lady dug down into her handbag and drew out a card. "N. Y. 433,558." She read, "I got that when the taxi turned around and headed back to New York, I suppose. But what on earth would two men want to take a taxi from New York all the way to Trenton for? Why didn't they come on the train?"

"That, Miss Norton," explained Whitney, "is the point of your story that makes the whole thing look rather suspicious. I will confess that when the Chief told me what you had said over the phone I didn't place much faith in it. There might have been a thousand good reasons for men allowing a local taxi to wait at the corner, but the very fact of its bearing a New York number makes it a distinctly interesting incident."

"Then you think that it may be a clue, after all?"

"It's a clue, all right," replied the operative, "but what it's a clue to, I can't say until we dig further into the matter. It's probable that these two men had a date for a poker party or some kind of celebration, missed the train in New York and took a taxi over rather than be left out of the party. But, at the same time, it's distinctly within the realm of possibility that the men you saw were implicated in last night's explosion. I'll take some time to get at the truth of the matter and, meanwhile, might I ask you to keep this information to yourself?"

"Indeed I shall," was the reply. "I won't tell a soul, honestly."

"After that promise, Al left the Norton house and made his way across town to

where the munitions factory reared its hastily constructed head against the sky. Row after row of flimsy buildings, roofed with tar paper and giving no outward evidence of their sinister mission in life—save for the high barbed-wire fence that enclosed them—formed the entire plant, for there shells were not made, but loaded, and the majority of the operations were by hand.

When halted at the gate, Whitney found that even his badge was of no use in securing entrance. Evidently made cautious by the events of the preceding night, the guard refused to admit anyone and even hesitated about taking Al's card to the superintendent. The initials "L. S. S. S." finally secured him admittance and such information as was available.

The Plant Little Damaged.

This, however, consisted only of the fact that someone had cut the barbed wire at an unguarded point and had placed a charge of explosive close to one of the large buildings. The one selected was used principally as a store house. Otherwise, as the superintendent indicated by an expressive wave of his hand, "it would have been good-night to the whole place."

"Evidently they didn't use a very heavy charge," he continued, "relying upon the subsequent explosions from the shells inside to do the damage. If

into before I came over here, it begins to look as if we might land the men responsible for this job before they're many hours older."

Ten minutes later he was on his way back to New York, not to report at headquarters, but to conduct a few investigations at the headquarters of the Green-and-White Taxicab Company.

"Can you tell me," he inquired of the manager in charge, "just where your taxi bearing the license number 433,558 was last night?"

"I can't," said the manager, "but we'll get the chauffeur up here and find out in short order."

"Hello," he called over an office phone, "who has charge of our cab bearing license number 433,558? . . . 'Murphy' is he it?" "Send him up—I'd like to talk to him."

Interrogating The Chauffeur.

A few moments later a beetle-jawed and none too cleanly specimen of the genus taxi-driver swaggered in and didn't even bother to remove his cap before sitting down.

"Murphy," said the Green-and-White manager, "where was your cab last night?"

"Well, let's see," commenced the chauffeur. "I took a couple to the Amsterdam 'Ayer in time for the show an' then picked up a fare on Broadway an' took him in the Hunderd-an-forties some place. Then I cruised

Also, it's none of your business why I show you." But you better come clean if you know what's good for you. Out with it! Where did you meet 'em and where did you drive 'em?"

"Realizing that escape was cut off and thoroughly cowed by the display of force, Murphy told the whole story—or as much of it as he knew. "I was drivin' down Broadway 'round Twenty-eight Street last night, 'bout ten o'clock," he confessed. "I'd taken that couple to the theater just as I told you an' that man up to Harlem. Then one of those tressee boys hailed me. . . . Three!" interrupted Whitney.

The Chauffeur's Story.

"That's what I said—'tree! They said they wanted to borrow my machine until 6 o'clock in the mornin' an' would give me two hundred dollars for it. I told 'em there was nothin' doin' an' they offered me two-fifty, swearin' that they'd have it back at the same corner at 6 o'clock sharp. Two hundred an' fifty bones being a whole lot more than I could coin in a night, I gambled with 'em an' let 'em have the machine, makin' 'em sure that I got the coin first. They drove off, two of 'em inside, an' I put in the rest of the night shootin' pool. When I got to the corner of Twenty-eight at 6 o'clock this mornin', there wasn't any sign of 'em—but the car was there, still hot from the hard ride they give her. That's all I know—'shelp me Gawd!'"

"Did the men have any bags with them?"

"Bags? No, no one!"

"What did they look like?"

"The one that talked with me was

the fares on us. Just a minute and I'll show you."

"Joe," he called, "bring me the record tape of Murphy's machine for last night and hold his car till you hear from me."

"This tape," he explained a few minutes later, "is operated something along the lines of a seismograph or any other instrument for detecting change in direction. An inked needle marks these straight lines and curves all the time the machine is moving and, when it is standing still, it oscillates slightly. By glancing at these tapes we can tell when any chauffeur is holding out on us, for it forms a clear record—not only of the distance the machine has travelled, but of the route it followed."

The Tell-Tale Tape.

"Yes, here's the trip to the theater 'round 8:30. See the sharp turn from Fifth Avenue into Forty-second Street, the momentary stop in front of the Amsterdam and the complete sweep as he turned around to get back to Broadway. Then there's the journey up to the Bronx or Harlem or wherever he went, another complete turn and an interrupted trip back down Broadway."

"Then this," cut in Whitney, unable to keep the excitement out of his voice,

cause we have yards of tape before we reach a stop-point and then the paper is worn completely through by the action of the needle in oscillating. Indicative of a long period of inaction. The return trip is just as plain."

"But," Whitney objected, "the whole thing hinges on where they went before going to Trenton. Murphy said they didn't have any bags, so they must have gone home or to some rendezvous to collect them. How are we going to find the corner where the machine turned?"

They Traverse The Route.

"By taking Murphy's car and driving it very carefully south on Broadway until the tape indicates precisely the distance marked on this one—the place where the turn was made. Then, driving down that street, the second distance shown on the tape will give you approximately the house you're looking for!"

"Good Lord," exclaimed Whitney, "that's applying science to it! Sherlock Holmes wasn't so smart after all!"

At and the manager agreed that there was too much traffic on Broadway in the daytime or early evening to attempt the experiment, but shortly after midnight, belated pedestrians might have wondered why a Green-and-White taxicab, containing two men, proceeded down Broadway at a snail's pace while everyone else and then it stopped and one of the men got out to examine something inside.

"I think this is the corner," whispered the garage manager to Whitney, when they reached Eighth Street, "but to be sure, we'll go back and try it over again, driving at a normal pace. It's lucky that this is a new instrument and therefore very accurate."

The second trial produced the same result as the first—the place they sought lay a few blocks south of Broadway, on Eighth.

Before they tried to find out the precise location of the house, Whitney phoned to headquarters and requested the loan of a score of men to assist him in the contemplated raid.

"Tell 'em to have their guns handy," he ordered, "because we may have to surround the block and search every house."

But the taxi-tape rendered that unnecessary. It indicated any one of three adjoining houses on the north side of the street because, as the manager pointed out, the machine had not turned round again until it struck a north-and-south thoroughfare, hence the houses must be on the north side.

The Raid A Success.

By this time the reserves were on hand and, upon instructions from Whitney, spread out in a fan-shaped formation, completely surrounding the houses front and rear. At a blast from a police whistle they roused the steps and, not waiting for the door to be opened, went through them shoulder first.

It was Whitney, who had elected to assist in the search of the center house, who captured his prey in a third floor bedroom.

Before the Germans knew what was happening Al was in the room, his flashlight playing over the floor and table in a hasty search for incriminating evidence. It didn't take long to find it, either. In one corner, only partly concealed by a newspaper whose flaming headlines referred to the explosion of the night before, was a collection of bombs which, according to later expert testimony was sufficient to blow a good-sized hole in the city of New York.

That was all they discovered at the time, but a judicious use of the third degree—coupled with promises of leniency—induced one of the prisoners to loosen up the next day and he told the whole story—precisely as the taxi-tape and Vera Norton had told it. The only missing ingredient was the paper behind the plot—the mysterious "No. 559"—whom Dick Walters later captured because of the clue on Shelf 45.

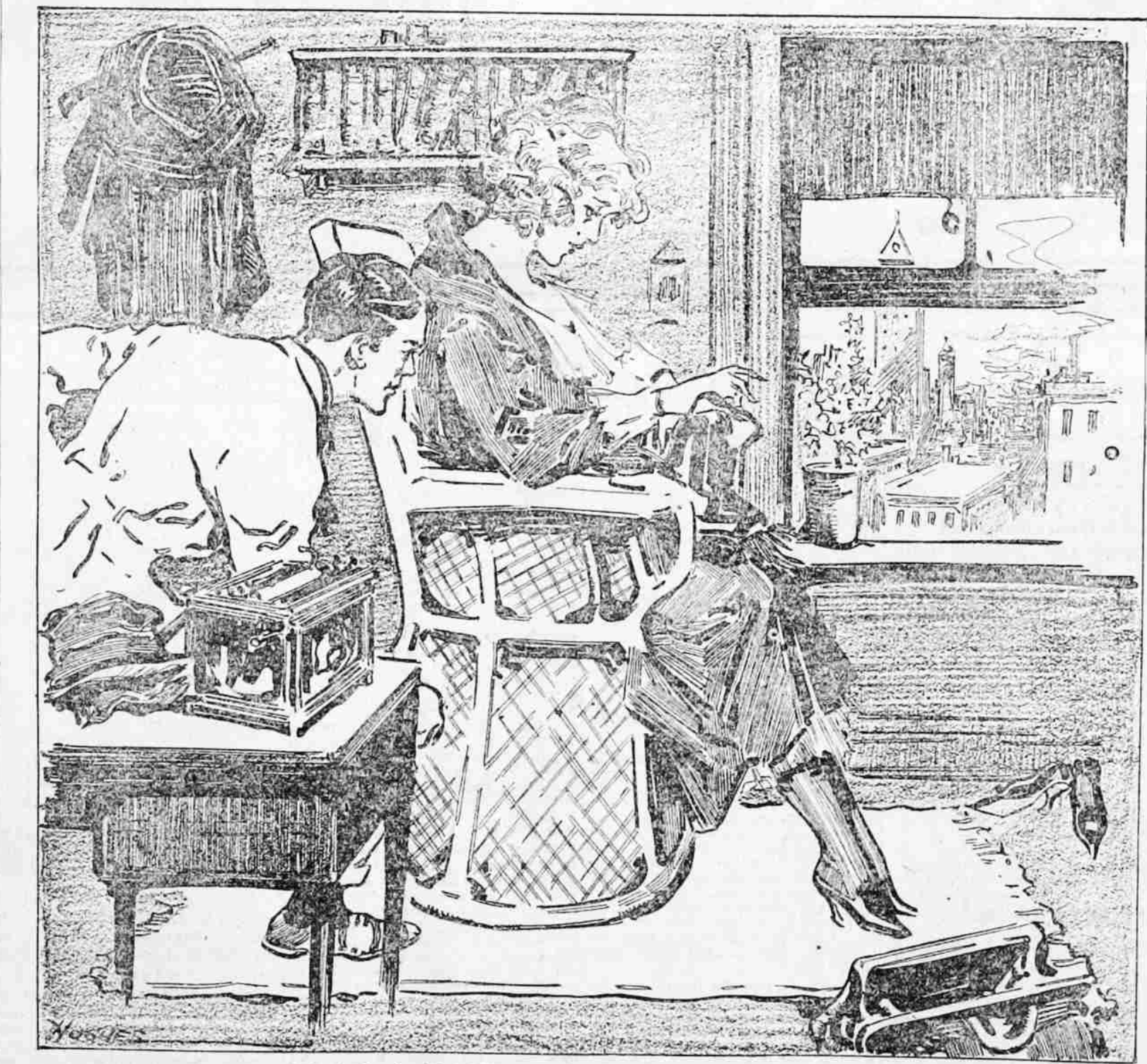
"So you see," commented Quinn at the time he finished the younger Pitt's account so far wrong when he cynically remarked that "there is a Providence that watches over children, imbeciles and the United States." In this case the principal clues were a book from the Public Library, the chance observations of a girl who couldn't sleep and a piece of white paper with some red markings on it.

"At that, though, it's not the first time that German agents have gotten into trouble over a scrap of paper." "What happened to Vera Norton?" I inquired.

"Beyond a little personal glory, not a thing in the world," replied Quinn. "Didn't I tell you that Al was married? You're always looking for romance. He's even in everyday life. Besides, it had been a bachelor, Whitney, it has been busy trying to round up the other loose ends of the Ewald case. Number 559 hadn't been captured then, you remember."

"Give me a match—my pipe's gone out. No, I can't smoke it here, it's too late. But speaking of small clues, I'll lead to big things, some day soon. I'll tell you the story of how a match—just like this, for all I know—led to the uncovering of one of the most difficult smuggling cases that the Customs Service ever tried to solve."

"A Match For The Government?" No. 9 in "The Long Arm of Uncle Sam" series and the true story of the case referred to above, will be published next.



"But the Number?" "I Have It Right Here," Was the Reply!

they'd hit upon any other building there'd be nothing but a hole in the ground now. As it is, the damage won't run over a few thousand dollars."

"Were the papers right in reporting that you picked some fragments of a black bag not far from the scene of the explosion?" Whitney asked.

"Yes, here they are," and the superintendent produced three pieces of lint from a drawer in his desk. "Two pieces of the top and what is evidently a piece of the side."

Whitney laid them on the desk and examined them carefully for a few moments. Then:

"Notice anything funny about these?" he inquired.

"No—what's the matter?"

"Not a thing in the world, except that the bag must have had a very peculiar look."

"Here's that!" and Whitney

tried to put the two pieces of metal which formed the lock together. But, inasmuch as both of them were "busted," they wouldn't join.

"Damnation!" exclaimed the superintendent. "What do you make of one?" stated Whitney calmly. "Could we with a little information, which I was

about my heigh' an' dressed in a dark suit. He an' the others had their hats pulled down over their eyes, so I couldn't see their faces."

"Did he talk with a German accent?"

"He sure did. I couldn't hardly make out what he was sayin'. But his money talked plain enough."

"Yes, and it's very likely to talk loud enough to send you to the pen, if you're not careful!" was Whitney's reply. "If you don't want to land there, keep your mouth shut about this. D'you get me?"

"I do, boss, I do."

"And you've told me all the truth—every bit of it?"

"Every little bit."

"All right, clear out!"

When Murphy left the room, Whitney

turned to the manager and, with a very smile, remarked: "Well, we've discovered where the car came from and how they got it. But that's all. We're really as much in the dark as before."

"No," replied the manager, musingly. "Not quite as much. Possibly you don't know it, but we have a device on every car that leaves this garage to take care of just such cases as this."

"To prevent drivers from running their machines all over town without pulling down the lever and then holding out

"is where he stopped to speak to the Germans?"

"Precisely," agreed the other, "and, as you'll note, that stop was evidently longer than either of the other two. They paid their fares, while Murphy's friends had to be relieved of \$250."

"From there on is what I'm interested in," announced Whitney. "What does the tape say?"

"It doesn't say anything," admitted the manager, with a smile. "But it indicates a whole lot. In fact, it blazes a blood-red trail that you ought to be able to follow with very little difficulty. See, when the machine started it kept on down Broadway—in fact there's no sign of a turn for several blocks."

"How many?"

"That we can't tell—now. But we can figure it up very accurately later. The machine then turned to the right and went west for a short distance only—stopped for a few moments—and then went on, evidently toward the ferry, for here's a delay to get on board, here's a wavy line evidently made by the motion of the boat when the hand ought to have been practically at rest and here's where they picked up the trip to Trenton. Evidently they didn't have to stop until they got there, be-

