



Common Kid Gloves

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

TAKING the long curve at a terrific rate of speed, Oakes Radell drove into the next straightaway and laughed aloud above the roaring of the motor when he found that the highway was deserted as far as he could see.

It was not the enthusiastic, care-free

laughter of the happy motorist atune with the spirit of the rushing wind; there was something cynical about it, something sinister in it, a suggestion of evil things. He might have been sure that the highway would be free of other vehicles and pedestrians at that particular point, Oakes

Radell told himself. Had it not been, a portion of his plans would have been ruined. His luck, therefore, was with him still—the good luck he had feared had deserted him.

He did not continue to follow the broad, smooth highway that twisted like a great serpent along the sparkling river. Once around the curve, he applied the brakes and forced the powerful roadster down to a decent sort of speed. He guided the car into a narrow, little-used road that curved into a brush-bordered ravine. Here, he was hidden effectually from the sight of those who might pass on the main thoroughfare a short distance away.

Oakes Radell laughed once more, softly, as the brakes screeched and smoked, and the big car rolled slowly to a stop. Radell was out of it instantly. He lighted a fresh cigar, and over the cupped hands that held the flaming match he peered closely into the brush at either side of the ravine, making certain that there was nobody near to observe him.

Satisfied, finally, that he was not under the close scrutiny of some other human being, he reached quickly into one of the pockets of the car and took out a small wrench. He had placed that particular wrench there purposely, so that no time would be lost. A moment later he was laboring to disconnect the speedometer, his laughter suddenly stilled and his countenance grim.

The work done, Oakes Radell sprang back into the car, stowed away the wrench, then quickly let in the clutch. He drove ahead for a short distance to where the ravine widened, then turned and roared back to the main highway. Into it he swung the roadster, and rushed along the smooth road toward the city thirty miles more to the north.

Oakes Radell, well-known as a man

of big business, whose time was counted in terms of dollars and cents, was going to a great deal of trouble to purchase a pair of common kid gloves.

He was motoring eighty miles from the city he called home, and where his business was established, to another and much smaller city where the shops were not so good, but where he intended making the purchase.

He had planned this thing well, spending many valuable hours over the plans. He had taken care of all the minor details. It was the neglect of minor details that wrecked most men, he declared to himself, and he did not intend to be wrecked! All his plans were perfect now, he thought. Any brainy man, Oakes Radell believed, who could force himself to set aside the heat of passionate anger and think and plan sensibly, could do what he contemplated doing and escape the consequences.

He had decided to kill Harrison Hadler.

He had to do it to save himself financially. He felt not the slightest compunction about it. Harrison Hadler was in his way, a menace, and so Harrison Hadler had to be removed at once. That was the sum and substance of the situation, the actual situation stripped of all superfluous facts.

Oakes Radell was a huge man of forty-five, a fighter in the business field, inclined now and then to the use of methods that were a bit unscrupulous. Harrison Hadler was a man of the same sort. They were bitter foes. They had clashed on the market repeatedly, each trying to cut the other's financial throat. And now, because of a trick, Harrison Hadler held Oakes Radell at his mercy—and Radell knew that Hadler would be inclined to show no mercy at all.

But Harrison Hadler, for all his business ability, had made one sad mistake in this affair. He had taken no associate fully into his confidence. And so Oakes Radell happened to know that, if Hadler could be put out of the way suddenly, his big deal would go to smash and many men would be saved financially—among them Oakes Radell. With Harrison Hadler dead, his associates in the big deal would not know for some time which way to turn. In that moment of consternation, Oakes Radell expected to stampede them, and not only save himself but also take a handsome profit.

The deed he had planned was the culmination of years of hate and evil wishes. Often before, he had half promised himself that he would slay Harrison Hadler one day. And now the time had come, and Oakes Radell expected to commit the crime and escape the consequences.

He had read that there is no such thing as a perfect crime, one that cannot be detected. But he did not believe it. He knew, oh the other hand, of crimes innumerable where the guilty ones never had been discovered and punished.

And he flattered himself that he had planned the thing well. He was going to be very bold about it. His plans were foolproof, his arrangements had been checked over until, he told himself, there was no possibility of a mistake that would be fatal. And his luck was with him!

He reached the outskirts of the smaller city, and instead of following the boulevard that would have taken him straight to the center of the retail district, he turned off into a side street and drove toward the poorer part of the town, toward a section where cheap shops and junky stores predominated.

Oakes Radell was dressed in an inconspicuous suit, and he wore a dark

motoring cap that was pulled down over his forehead. He believed that he would not be noticed particularly in a crowd. He wanted to purchase a pair of thin kid gloves, but he did not want the world to know of his purchase.

Stopping the roadster in the middle of a block, Radell crossed the street to a cheap department store. He had been watching the newspapers of this town, and he knew that to-day there was a sale of men's gloves at this particular store.

He entered and drifted down an aisle toward the glove counter. There was a throng of men before it, as bad as women at a bargain day rush. Oakes Radell smiled inwardly when he saw that his luck was still with him.

A quick glance at the throng told him there was nobody near he knew. Oakes Radell did not frequent this part of the city on his visits, and few men who knew him did. He realized that it would look peculiar if an acquaintance saw Oakes Radell buying a cheap pair of gloves at a bargain counter. But he trusted to his luck.

He edged closer to the counter. There was one huge tray of gloves—black kid, light weight—that attracted his attention immediately. The sign on them said one dollar ninety-eight cents. Oakes Radell had the exact change ready.

"Pair of those—nines," he told the clerk. "Never mind wrapping 'em up!"

He took the gloves and handed over his dollar ninety-eight. A moment later the gloves were in his coat pocket, and Oakes Radell was hurrying from the store.

In his roadster once more, he turned back toward his home city. Once out of town, he traveled fast, always with an eye for traffic officers. He did not want to be overhauled and put under arrest, but he did want to make as good time as possible.

Again he came to the rough road

that ran into the brush-bordered ravine. Again, he found that the highway was deserted. He chuckled as he guided the car out of sight of traffic. His luck still was with him!

Now he coupled the speedometer again, drove back to the highway and rushed toward the city. Late in the afternoon he rolled up to the garage where he kept his cars. A mechanic hurried forward.

"Have a good drive, Mr. Radell?"

"Very good. But I think there's a fouled spark plug."

"I'll look at it this evening, sir."

"The gas consumption is the main thing. Afraid the mixture is a bit rich. Let's check up on it."

"Yes, sir."

"Remember what the speedometer read when I left?" Radell asked.

"I wrote it down on this card, sir—eight thousand five hundred sixty."

"Um!" Radell grunted. "And we have just a hundred more now."

"So I see, sir."

"Now check the gas and let me know to-morrow. I know how much I had in the tank when I started."

Oakes Radell walked slowly around the corner to the bachelor apartment-house where he resided. He went up to his suite, and not until he was safely inside his living-room, with the corridor door locked behind him, did he indulge in the luxury of a smile.

So! That mechanic would swear, if necessary, that he had driven the roadster only one hundred miles. And the round trip to that other city was one hundred sixty. That gas tank had been fuller than the mechanic had known.

Just a little thing, but it was one of the minor details. And Oakes Radell had planned an abundance of them. He sat

down in an easy chair, lighted a cigar, and thought it all out again.

They might suspect him when Harrison Hadler was found dead. But they would not be able to fasten evidence upon him. He had spent the afternoon riding out of the city, a thing he often did when he was involved in some big financial schema. A score of men could swear to that habit of Radell's.

He had purchased a pair of gloves, but they never could be traced to him, he believed. And he would use those gloves that night, and drop them at the scene of the crime. He had plenty of gloves, but he did not want to use an old pair of his own. He might accidentally drop one while making his escape, and that would spell disaster. The business of the gloves was only a minor detail, but the way he had gone about it showed how thorough Oakes Radell was in this affair.

For a time he thought of Harrison Hadler. He had hated him for years! Between the two men there had existed a peculiar enmity that had started from no man knew what. Even Hadler and Radell did not know.

And now that Hadler had the chance to crush Radell, the latter was ready to remove Hadler. The killing of Hadler was no more to him than the robbing of some minor financier through an unscrupulous deal. He would emerge from the affair victorious, he would be saved financially and his fortune augmented—and Harrison Hadler would be out of his way forever!

It was a little past five o'clock in the evening. Oakes Radell left his easy chair and retired to the bathroom. He bathed as usual, lighted another cigar, and dressed carefully. At precisely six by the clock he descended in the elevator as he had done almost every evening for years.

He spoke to the elevator boy, to the clerk at the desk, stopped at the door to draw on his gloves, and then went off down the street, walking briskly and swinging his stick. He walked six blocks to his favorite club, entered, surrendered hat and coat and stick, and went into the lounging room.

Half a score of men were there, and Oakes Radell greeted them distantly, like a man who has big business on his mind. He read the evening papers for about an hour, then went into the dining room. At his usual table, Oakes Radell ordered his dinner from the usual waiter.

Another member sat down opposite, and Radell held some slight conversation with him.

“Busy days on the market,” Radell confided. “I’ve been planning all day, and I’m mighty tired. Meant to go to the opera, but instead I’m going home and to bed.”

“I can always sleep well at the opera,” the other said, chuckling.

Oakes Radell lingered in the lounging-room a short time after he had finished his dinner. He engaged in a minor political argument, discussed golf, and made a subscription for some benefit or other. He was trying to appear natural, calm, ordinary—and he succeeded.

About nine o’clock he got hat and coat and stick and went out upon the street. An acquaintance walked three blocks with him and turned off. Oakes Radell went directly to the apartment-house and stopped at the desk to ask whether there were any telegrams. He knew there was none, but he wanted to register on the clerk’s mind the hour at which he had returned.

“Half past nine,” Radell said. “A little early, but I think I’ll retire. Got a big day ahead of me to-morrow, I’m afraid. Do not let me be disturbed.”

“Very well, sir,” said the clerk.

“Of course if my secretary, Mr.

James, calls, I am to see him immediately,” Radell said, as an afterthought.

“Yes, sir,” said the clerk.

Oakes Radell thought that was very good. If anything happened in the questioning line, the clerk would repeat that conversation. It would serve to show that Oakes Radell was in his suite, that he had been ready to talk with his secretary if the man wanted to see him. Oakes Radell happened to know that the secretary would not call—he was out-of the city for the night.

In his suite, Radell undressed and donned dressing gown and slippers. Then he snapped out the lights, threw up the shade at one of the windows, and sat there looking down at the glistening lights of the avenue.

Once more he contemplated the plans he had made, went over what he had done already to be sure he had neglected nothing, and considered what he had yet to accomplish. He could find no error, not the least flaw. He felt a glow of triumph.

Then he thought of Harrison Hadler again. How he hated the man! His years of hatred had culminated in an intense will to destroy his enemy. And he would accomplish it within a few hours.

Harrison Hadler, a childless widower, lived in a suite in a building two blocks away. He had a Japanese servant who did not sleep in the apartment. Radell knew that. He knew, also, having found it out himself, that Hadler retired at eleven o’clock without fail. He was regular in his habits, because he had been threatened with ill health, and was the sort of man to obey his physician without question.

Puffing at his black cigar, Oakes Radell forced his tumbling nerves to a state of normalcy. He wanted to go about this thing in a methodical manner, as he would go about some business deal. There were

just so many steps to take, so many things to be done in a certain way. So far, there had been no slip—and Radell determined that there should be none!

“A man who uses his brains can do anything and get away with it,” he muttered to himself. “Not a chance for a mistake—not a chance! In a short time it will be over!”

The clock chimed the hour of eleven. Oakes Radell tossed away the end of his cigar and went into his bedchamber. He dressed swiftly and carefully. He put on a cheap black suit that he had not worn in years, a dark cap, black shoes with rubber heels.

Then he opened the small safe in one corner of his bedchamber and took from it an automatic pistol. The pistol was loaded and in perfect condition, and wrapped in a bit of silk cloth. Radell removed the silk cloth from the muzzle, holding a handkerchief in his left hand so he would leave no fingerprints on the gun. With the piece of silk he polished the pistol well from muzzle to butt. He was taking no chances. He did not want a mark on the gun.

Having polished the weapon to his complete satisfaction, he put it down on the end of the bed. He took the bit of silk to the fireplace and burned it. He did not want some detective finding it, saying that there were drops of gun oil on it, and that it once had been wrapped around a gun.

When the bit of silk had been burned, Radell blew the soft ashes away carefully. He was smiling slightly as he turned from the fireplace. He was even careful to put the burned match in the ash tray on his smoking table.

“Minor details!” he muttered. “Pay attention to the minor details and everything will be all right!”

Now he got out the new gloves he

had purchased, looked at them carefully, and started to draw them on. They were the size he had ordered, his correct size, yet they seemed small. Radell tugged at them, stretched the fingers, worked his hands into them and finally got them to suit him. They were tight, thin, yet gave his fingers free play.

He picked up the pistol and slipped it into his coat pocket, buttoned the coat, and made sure that the weapon did not bulge the garment. Once more he smiled slightly. He was forgetting nothing—his luck was still with him!

Radell was ready now. He found that he was not nervous at all, that he had steeled himself for the deed. He slipped to the door, listened for a moment, then opened it slightly and peered into the wide corridor. There was nobody in sight. He could see the elevator diagram, and it told him that both cars were at the bottom.

Radell stepped into the hall and closed the door behind him, listening for the spring lock to click into place. Like a shadow, he went along the corridor and to the rear stairs, used only by servants and tradesmen.

Down the stairs he hurried, making not the slightest noise. At the bottom he hesitated to listen again. A moment later he was out in the dark alley.

He had to walk a block, cross a well-lighted street, and then go another block through an alley to reach the rear of the apartment-house wherein Harrison Hadler resided. But he did not hesitate. When he reached the cross-street, a sort of danger zone, he found that there was nobody in sight. Luck still was with him!

Presently, he was in the rear of the building he sought. Standing in the deep shadows, he looked at the rear and side of it. He knew where Harrison Hadler’s suite was located, knew the windows that

belonged to it, and now sought them out. And now he found everything as he had expected and hoped to find it. The window of Hadler's bedroom was open half way. Hadler was a "fresh air fiend."

The windows of the Hadler suite were all dark, and those of the suites adjoining were dark, too. Oakes Radell made sure that the pistol was in his coat pocket where he had placed it, then moved nearer the wall of the building. He was glad, now, that he always had kept in physical trim. For here was a job for an athlete.

He listened a moment longer, then crouched and sprang. His fingers caught and clung to the projection of a standpipe. Oakes Radell, calling upon all his strength, pulled himself up until he could grasp the bottom of the fire-escape.

A moment later he was standing on the lowest fire-escape landing, breathing heavily. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the dust from the palms of his gloves. Then, crouching in the shadows, he waited until his breathing returned to normal, until his heart stopped pounding at his ribs.

The rest was easy, he told himself. He had only to go up the fire-escape to that open window on the floor above. The entire length of the fire-escape was in deep darkness, too, no light from the street arcs striking it. Oakes Radell would have chuckled again, only he thought it best not to do so.

Up the fire-escape he went silently, taking his time about it, careful to make no sound, stopping now and then to listen. And after a time he stood beside the open window, his goal. Here he gathered his courage again, steeled himself once more. The room was dark; the only sound he heard was stentorian breathing.

Radell parted the curtains and

slipped over the sill and into the room. With his back against the wall, he stood rigid, making sure that the sleeper had not been disturbed. Certain of that, he reached across and lowered the window an inch at a time until it was closed entirely. Then he drew the shade.

The moment was at hand now. Yet Oakes Radell moved with caution and did not forget the minor details. He crept across to the other door and listened there, hearing nothing. He fumbled along the wall until he found the electric switch, and suddenly snapped on the lights of the bedroom.

Stepping swiftly up beside the bed, Radell waited. Before him was the man he hated, asleep. He could do the deed now, and make his get-away. But he wanted more than this man's death. He wanted Harrison Hadler to know who had slain him. He wanted to see a look of terror in the face of his enemy.

Hadler's breathing became broken; he stirred. Presently, he rolled over on the bed, and his hand clutched at one end of a pillow. Oakes Radell waited calmly, cruelly. Hadler opened his eyes.

There was surprise in his face at first, and then he struggled to sit up on the edge of the bed. Radell stepped back a pace and watched. Harrison Hadler's eyes were blinking in the bright light. And now he seemed to realize the identity of the intruder. Sleep left him, his brain was functioning normally.

"You!" he gasped. "What—what is it? What are you doing in here?"

Radell stepped closer. "Can't you guess?" he snarled, speaking in low tones.

"I don't know—" Hadler stammered.

"Think you'll wreck me, do you?" Radell said. "Going to break me, eh? Here is the showdown, Hadler! I've hated you for years, and now I'm going to make you

pay the price. Your associates don't know all your plans. So I'll save my financial self, stampede them, take an enormous profit. There's a comfortable thought for you to take with you—where you are going!"

"You—you mean—?"

Oakes Radell took the pistol from his pocket, but did not take his eyes from Harrison Hadler's face. Hadler glanced down at the weapon, and his face went white. His lower jaw dropped, his eyes seemed to bulge.

"You—you mean to kill me!" he gasped.

"This automatic is equipped with a silencer, you'll notice," Radell spoke calmly. "A silencer is not so good on a pistol as on a rifle, but it helps some. Even if the shot is heard, I'll be gone before anybody can decide where it was fired."

"You—you'd kill me!" Hadler gasped, again.

"Why not? You've tried for years to ruin me."

"Because you're a crook in business!" Hadler said.

"Not more so than you! We're both business crooks, and you know it! I've planned this thing well, Hadler! I could have shot you while you were asleep, but I wanted you to know—"

"You'll go to the chair!"

"Nothing like it! I've made my plans, and luck is with me!"

Suddenly, Harrison Hadler sprang from the side of the bed, sprang straight at his adversary. It was the move that Radell needed. He had been unable to pull the trigger while his man sat quietly and talked. But action gave him the incentive.

The pistol spat twice. Harrison Hadler tottered, and would have crashed to the floor had not Radell seized the falling body and eased it down to the rug. Radell

knew that a fall might attract the attention of somebody on the floor below.

Radell glanced quickly around the room, then looked down at the man on the floor. He made sure that Hadler was dead. Then he tossed the pistol on the bed. He did not have to worry about that pistol. Some months before, on one of his automobile trips, he had found that pistol, with the silencer attached, beside the road where he had stopped to rest. Some fleeing crook had dropped it there, Radell supposed. Let them trace the pistol, the fools of detectives! They never could trace it back to him!

Now he snapped out the lights and listened at the door. No sound reached his ears to tell that anybody in the building had been aroused. He crossed swiftly to the window, rolled up the shade, opened the window slowly and carefully, and got out on the landing of the fire-escape.

He was fully as cautious on the return journey as he had been on the journey to Hadler's suite. He was not at all nervous, not shaken by a sense of blood-guilt. Killing a man had not shocked the cells of his brain.

He went down the fire-escape carefully, and from the last landing dropped to the floor of the alley. He removed the gloves and threw them into a trash can standing there. He waited a moment, and then crept through the alley like a shadow, crossed the dangerous, lighted street, went through the other alley, and gained the rear of his own apartment house. Into it he slipped, hurried up the stairs, got into his own suite, and locked the door behind him.

He did not stop to rest. There was no reaction setting in. Reaction, he knew, might be a fatal mistake. So he kept busy. He brushed the old suit and put it away, also the cap and shoes. He was careful to

remove every speck of dust. He prepared for bed, mussed the pillows and covers, wiped the perspiration from his face, and mussed up his hair. Did anybody happen to drop in on him now, he would look as though he had just got out of bed.

All that done, he sat down in an easy chair and lighted another cigar. He almost laughed. The thing had been absurdly easy! Luck had been with him! He had remembered every minor detail. There had been no slip!

The pistol could not be traced back to him. And he had tossed the gloves into the trash can. If the detectives found them, they would be a clew that might lead anywhere except in the direction of Oakes Radell.

Everything had gone off smoothly. In the morning, he would act in a natural manner, go to his office and prepare for the financial battle, and pretend surprise and shock when he heard the news of Hadler's death.

He would speculate as to the murderer, as other men would do. He expected to be questioned by officers, because it was well known that he and Hadler were enemies. But he was not afraid of the questions! Luck was with him yet!

II.

BEFORE he ate breakfast the following morning he felt a bit shaky for a time, as though his conscience had rumbled once or twice. But there was no violent reaction, and he told himself that the worst was over.

Nor was there time for reaction during the day. The news of the murder was made public at an early hour. There was a riot on the market. Oakes Radell found himself fighting like a wild beast to protect his financial interests.

Twice during the day he thought for

an instant that he was not going to be able to weather the storm. But Harrison Hadler's associates were disconcerted, and Oakes Radell struck at the right moment, before they could formulate a new campaign. He smashed down stocks and he smashed Hadler's associates—and emerged from the contest a heavy winner.

Four o'clock in the afternoon, with the tumult at an end, he sat in the private office of his suite, discussing the Hadler crime with two of his brokers.

"I just about hated Hadler myself," he admitted. "Hadler had a lot of enemies. Of course, I know nothing of the circumstances except what I have read in the newspaper extras, and the rumors, but I'd say offhand that some burglar shot him."

"Might be," one of the brokers said.

"The police will get the fellow, probably. Hate to hear of any man being shuffled off like that, of course—but his death certainly saved us!"

The brokers nodded. Oakes Radell lighted his cigar afresh and started to continue the discussion. But the door opened, and his private secretary stood framed in it.

"Detective Sergeant McGuire and another officer to see you, sir," the secretary said.

Radell had been expecting it. He welcomed it. He would meet the detectives, convince them of his innocence, let them chase away after useless clews. He told his secretary to show them in, and they entered immediately. The two brokers took their departure.

Oakes Radell motioned toward two chairs at the end of the long table in the middle of the room, and the detectives sat down. Detective Sergeant McGuire took the chair nearest Radell.

Saul McGuire, as most men knew

him, was fifty and had been in the department since the age of twenty-two. There was nothing sensational about the methods of Saul McGuire. He was no Sherlock Holmes. He gathered facts, compiled them, investigated them, and in a heap of chaff found a grain of truth. A simple and direct method that was neither swift nor spectacular, but got results.

"Want to talk to you about the Hadler murder," Saul McGuire said. "You've heard of it?"

"Naturally. It created a sensation in the market."

"I understand you cleaned up pretty well."

Oakes Radell's face flushed and a suspicion of anger showed in his manner. "Mr. Hadler and myself were leaders of two rival groups in the market," he said. "I admit that his death proved profitable to my side. I would not have taken advantage of it, I assure you, except that I was compelled to do so to keep from being wiped out myself. If the police wish to know the inside of the deal—"

"Don't care anything about it, Mr. Radell," Saul McGuire cut in. "I want to ask you a few questions."

"Go ahead."

"You and Hadler weren't the best of friends?"

"Quite the contrary. We did not like each other personally, and we were business enemies always."

"You're frank about it."

"Why not? I have nothing to hide. I'll be still more frank—I just about hated Hadler! I choked up with wrath every time I set eyes on him. But I'm sorry to hear that he was murdered."

"Have any personal quarrel with him lately?" Saul McGuire wanted to know.

"No, sir! I have not exchanged

words with Mr. Hadler for three months or so. We took pains to have luncheon at different cafes, and all that. We fought our fight in the market, through our brokers."

"I understand. Mr. Radell, I want to eliminate you, if I can, from a list of suspects. I can do that, possibly, by asking you some things."

"Go ahead."

"Where were you yesterday afternoon? I have ascertained that you were not here at the office."

"Easily explained," Radell replied. "When I have a big deal on I have a habit of getting into a roadster I own and roaring over the country roads. It helps me think. Yesterday I took a ride up the river drive."

"How long were you gone?"

"I got back to the garage around four or five, I believe. The mechanic can tell you. I spoke to him about a fouled spark plug. We mentioned, too, that I had gone just a hundred miles while out, and I said I wanted to check up the gasoline consumption—thought it was too great."

"Then what—"

"Went home, bathed and dressed, went to the club for dinner and to loaf a while, then returned to my apartment. I retired early and got up at the usual hour. All this can be verified if you care to go to the trouble."

"Were you ever in Mr. Hadler's rooms?"

"Once—about three months ago. It was peculiar, too. For the first and only time in our lives, Hadler and I happened to be on the same side of the market. Neither of us guessed the fact until the time came for a showdown. I went to his rooms one evening with one of my brokers to decide with him how to handle the men we had caught short."

"Haven't been there since?"

"I have not!" Radell said.

"Mr. Radell, we found some fingerprints in the room where the murder was committed. As a matter of form—"

"You want my finger-prints?" Radell interrupted. "Certainly!"

Detective Sergeant Saul McGuire, his face inscrutable, motioned to the other officer, who happened to be a finger-print man. He went forward, carrying his little case. Oakes Radell submitted with a soft smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

The fools! If they had found fingerprints there, they were none of his! Perhaps, when they found that out, they would rush away on some wild-goose chase.

The finger-print man concluded his work and stepped back to the table. Oakes Radell wiped the smut from the tips of his fingers and looked questioningly at McGuire. But the detective sergeant was watching the finger-print man. Finally the latter turned to McGuire and nodded. The detective sergeant faced Oakes Radell again.

"Now and then, Mr. Radell," he said, "we find a man who imagines that he can plan and execute a crime in such a manner that he never will be detected. But there always is something, it seems, to point the finger of guilt at him. Perhaps it is Providence. Perhaps it is because no human being is perfect and hence no human being can make perfect plans. There generally is some little thing overlooked—some little thing that wrecks the whole."

"I suppose so," said Radell. He was almost at the point of laughter. The minor detail! The little thing! He had attended particularly to the minor details.

"I believe that it was so in this case," Saul McGuire continued. "The murderer left the gun with which he committed the crime. And we also found a

pair of gloves."

"A pair of gloves?" Radell said, still smiling.

"I'll show them to you, Mr. Radell."

Saul McGuire took a package from his pocket, unfolded it, and Radell saw the new kid gloves stretched on a piece of oiled paper.

"Common, cheap kid gloves!" said Saul McGuire. "New ones, at that. Ever see them before, Mr. Radell?"

"I scarcely think so."

"They do not belong to you?"

"Certainly not!" Radell laughed. "My Heavens, sir! Those are old-fashioned gloves—black kid of a style a dozen years old. Think that I'd wear a pair of gloves like that? If I did, it'd be all over town that I was going broke, my loans would be called in, and I'd probably be asked to settle my club bill every evening."

He laughed again, but Detective Sergeant Saul McGuire did not change the expression of his face. For the first time, watching that face, Oakes Radell felt a twinge of fear. But he told himself in the next instant that it was preposterous. He had planned well, and he had made no mistakes!

"Let me get this right now," said McGuire. "You never saw those gloves before?"

"No, sir!"

"They are not yours, and you never have touched them?"

"Certainly not!"

McGuire turned to his associate. "You heard that, Peters?" he asked.

"Sure did, Saul!"

"Will you kindly tell me what all this is about?" Oakes Radell asked.

"Certainly!" McGuire replied. "It is my opinion that the man who killed Mr. Hadler made his plans very well, indeed. I

assume that he wore gloves so he would leave no finger-prints in the suite or on the gun. As a matter of truth, there were no finger-prints on the gun."

"You said a short time ago that you found prints."

"We did," said McGuire. "Notice these gloves, please. They are new gloves, possibly purchased for the occasion. Difficult to tell where, for it is a common pattern and make of glove, though out of date. Thousands of stores undoubtedly have some of those gloves on their shelves. Possibly this pair was bought years ago and never used until now.

"New gloves, as we all know, are a nuisance the first time you put them on. The confounded things are tight, and we have to force down the fingers of one glove with the opposite hand. We get on the right glove, and then with the gloved hand we force down the fingers of the left. I hate new gloves."

"But—" Radell objected.

"Oh, yes, to get to the point! Well, Mr. Radell, the man who killed Harrison Hadler wore these new gloves. He had trouble, I suppose, getting them on. He forced down the fingers of the right glove. He left the finger-prints of his left finger tips on the soft, new kid of the right-hand glove."

Oakes Radell felt another spasm of

fear, but McGuire was not even looking at him.

"So we have the finger-prints of the murderer, despite the fact that he took such great precautions," McGuire continued. "There's always some little thing that points the way to the guilty man. You have said, Mr. Radell, that you never saw these gloves before, never owned them, never touched them. Yet your finger-prints are on those gloves, Radell! The prints of your left finger tips are on the fingers of the right-hand glove. There are other prints on the back of the right-hand glove. This officer took your prints a moment ago—and they correspond!

"You certainly made a sad mistake, Radell, when you used nice, new gloves, the surface of which would take a print easily. And you made another sad mistake when you discarded the gloves so near the scene of the crime."

"I?" Oakes Radell gasped. "I, you say?"

"You!" Saul McGuire thundered, getting upon his feet. "You shot down Harrison Hadler! You wore gloves to keep from leaving prints, yet left prints on the gloves. A bit of irony! A pair of common kid gloves has nailed you. Put out your wrists, Radell! Here's where you start for the *electric chair!*"