

THE
ELEVENTH
HOUR

Edwin Balmer
William B. MacHarg

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The ELEVENTH HOUR

By Edwin Balmer & William B. MacHarg

Authors of "The Man Higher Up"

Another of the scientific detective stories by the well-known authors, Edwin Balmer and William B. MacHarg. Herein Luther Trant makes a scientific excursion into our innermost psychology. Of the entire human race, no one is less easily ruffled than a Chinaman. He has nerves of steel and a will of similar quality. But nevertheless even such a constitution can betray itself if the correct scientific instruments are applied to it.

It was the third Sunday in March. A roaring storm of mingled rain and snow, driven by a riotous wind—wild even for the Great Lakes in winter—had surged through the streets of Chicago all day; a little after ten o'clock at night the

temperature fell rapidly and the rain and snow changed suddenly to sleet. At twenty minutes past the hour, the slush that filled the streets began to freeze. Mr. Luther Trant, hastening on foot back to his rooms at his club, observed that the soft mess underfoot had become coated with tough, rubbery ice, through which the heels of his shoes crunched at every step while his toes left almost no mark.

Trant had been taking the day "off," away from both his office and his club; but fifteen minutes before, he had called up the club for the first time that day and had learned that a woman had been inquiring for him at frequent intervals during the day over the telephone, and that a special delivery letter which she had sent had been awaiting him since six o'clock. The psychologist was therefore hastening homeward, suddenly stricken with a sense of guilt and dereliction.

As he hurried down Michigan Avenue, he was considering the wonderful change in his affairs that had taken place so quickly. Six months ago he had been a callow assistant in a psychological laboratory. The very professor whom he had served had smiled when he had declared his belief in his power to apply the necromancy of the new psychology to the detection of crime. But the delicate instruments of the laboratory—the chronoscopes, kymographs, plethysmographs, which made visible and recorded unerringly, unflinching, the most secret emotions of the heart and the hidden workings of the brain; the experimental investigations of Freud and Jung, of the German and French scientists, of Munsterberg and others in America—had fired him with a belief in them and in himself. In the face of

misunderstanding and derision he had tried to trace the criminal, not by the world-old method of the marks the evil-doer had left on *things*, but by the evidences which the crime had left on the mind of the criminal himself. And so well had he succeeded that now not even a Sunday was free from appeal to him for help in trouble. As he entered the club, the doorman addressed him hurriedly:

"She called again, Mr. Trant, at nine o'clock. She wanted to know if you had received the note, and said you were to have it as soon as you came in."

Trant took the letter—a plain, coarse envelope, with the red two-cent and the blue special delivery stamps stuck askew above an uneven line of great, unsteady characters. Within it, ten lines spread this wild appeal across the paper:

If Mr. Trant will do—for some one unknown to him—the greatest possible service—to save perhaps a life—a life! I beg him to come to—Ashland Avenue between seven and nine o'clock to-night! Eleven! For God's sake come—between seven and nine! Later will be too late. Eleven! I tell you it may be worse than useless to come after eleven! So for God's sake—if you are human—help me! You will be expected.

W. NEWBERRY.

The psychologist glanced at his watch. It was already twenty-five minutes to eleven! And then he paused a full minute to scrutinize the handwriting, a shade of perplexity on his face.

The hand—identical in note and envelope—was that of a man!

"You're sure it was a woman's voice on the 'phone?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes, sir, a lady."

Trant picked up the telephone on the desk; "Halloo! Is this the West End Police Station? This is Mr. Trant. Can you send a plain-clothes man and a patrolman at once to—Ashland Avenue? No; I don't know what the trouble is, but I understand it is a matter of life and death; I want to have help at hand if I need it. You are sending Detective Siler? Because he knows the house? Oh, there has been trouble there before? I see. Tell him to hurry. I will try and get there myself before eleven."

Trant hurried into a waiting taxicab. The streets were all but empty, and into the stiffening ice the chains on the tires of the driving wheels bit sharply; so it still lacked ten minutes of the hour when he jumped out at his destination. The vacant street, and the one dim light on the first floor of the house told him the police had not yet arrived.

The porticoed front and the battered fountain, which rose obscurely from the ice-crusted sod of the narrow lawn,

showed that the structure had formerly been a pretentious one. In the rear, as well as Trant could see in the indistinct glare of the street lamps, there was a long one-storied addition.

As the psychologist rang the bell and was admitted, he saw at once that he had not been mistaken in believing that the cab which had passed his motor only an instant before had come from the same house; for the mild-eyed, white-haired little man who opened the door almost before the bell had stopped ringing had not yet taken off his overcoat. Behind him, in the dim light of a shaded lamp, an equally placid, white-haired little woman was laying off her wraps; and their gentle faces were so completely at variance with the wild terror of the note which Trant now held between his fingers in his pocket, that he hesitated before he asked his question:

"Is W. Newberry here?"

"I am the Reverend Wesley Newberry," the old man answered. "I am no longer in the active service of the Lord; but in case of immediate necessity, if I can be of use——"

"No, no!" Trant checked him. "I have not come to ask your services as a minister, Mr. Newberry. To-night when I returned to my club at half past ten, I was informed that a woman—apparently in great anxiety—had been trying to get me all day on the telephone, and had finally referred me to this special delivery letter which was delivered at six o'clock." Trant extended it to the staring little minister. "Telephone calls and note may have been a hoax; but— In Heaven's name! What is the matter, Mr. Newberry?"

The two old people, in great amazement, had taken the note. But the moment she glanced at it, the little woman dropped, shaking and pale, into the nearest chair. The little man had lost his placidity and was shuddering in uncontrolled fear.

"This note is not from me Mr.—Mr. Trant," he said, staring at the letter in terror, "but it is, I must not deceive myself, undoubtedly from our son Walter. This writing, though broken beyond anything I have seen from him in his worst dissipations, is undoubtedly his. Yet Walter is not here, Mr. Trant! I mean—I mean, he should not be here! There have been reasons—we have not seen or heard of Walter for two months. He cannot be here now—surely he cannot be here now, unless—unless— My wife and I went to a friend's this evening; this is as though the writer had known we were going out! We left at half past six and have only just returned. Oh, it is impossible that Walter could have come here!" The livid terror grew stronger on his rosy, simple face as he turned to his wife. "We have not seen Adele, Martha, since we came in! And this gentleman tells us that a woman in great trouble was sending for him. If Walter has been here— But come—let us look together!"

He had turned, with no further word of explanation, and pattered excitedly to the stairs, followed by his wife and Trant.

"Adele! Adele!" the old man cried anxiously, knocking at the door nearest the head of the stairs; and when he received no answer, he pushed the door open. The room was empty. "There is something very wrong here, Mr. Trant! This is the

bedroom of my daughter-in-law, Walter's wife. She should be here at this hour! My son—we could never control him, Mr. Trant, he was always unprincipled—threatened Adele's life two months ago because she—she found it impossible to live longer with him. It was terrible! We had to call the police. We forbade Walter the house. So if she called on you because he was threatening her again, and he returned here to-night to carry out his threat, then Adele——!"

"But why should *he* have written me that note?" Trant asked. "However—there is no time to lose, Mr. Newberry. We must search the entire house at once and make sure, at least, that Mrs. Walter Newberry is not in some other part of it!"

"You are right—quite right!" answered the little man as he ran rapidly from door to door, throwing the rooms open to the impatient scrutiny of the psychologist. While they were still engaged in this search upon the upper floor, a tall clock on the landing of the stairs struck eleven!

And scarcely had the last deep stroke of the hour ceased to resound in the hall, when suddenly, sharply, and without other warning, a revolver shot rang out, followed so swiftly by three others that the four reports sounded almost as one through the silent house! The little woman screamed and seized her husband's arm. He, in turn, seized Trant's. They stood thus for an instant, for though the shots were plainly inside the house, the echoes made it impossible to locate them exactly. But almost immediately a fifth shot, seeming louder and more distinct in its separateness, broke the stillness.

"It is in the billiard room!" the wife shrieked, with a woman's quicker location of indoor sounds.

The little minister ran to seize the lamp, as Trant turned toward the rear of the house. Mrs. Newberry started with them; but at that instant the doorbell rang furiously and she turned back perfunctorily to answer it. The psychologist pushed her husband on, and taking the lamp from the elder man's shaking hand, he followed Newberry into the one-story addition which formed the back part of the house. The L-shaped passage opened at one end, apparently upon a side porch. Newberry hurried down the other branch of the passage past a door which was plainly that of a kitchen, came to another farther down the passage, tried it, and recoiled in fresh bewilderment to find it locked.

"It is never locked, never!" he cried.

"We must break it down then!" Trant drew the little man aside and bracing himself against the opposite wall, threw his shoulder against the door once, twice, and a third time, without effect. Then a uniformed patrolman, and another in plain clothes, running after them with Mrs. Newberry, added their weight to Trant's, and the door crashed open.

A blast of air from the outside storm instantly blew out both the lamp in Trant's hand and another which had been burning in the room. Siler and the patrolman, swearing softly, felt for matches. The psychologist ran to the window, which was open and gazed intently into the night. After a moment, he closed it and turned to look about the room in the light of the lamp which Siler had succeeded in lighting.

This room which Mrs. Newberry had called the billiard room, he saw was really a storeroom, littered with an accumulation of old rubbish and furniture, the arrangement of which showed plainly that the room had recently been fitted for occupancy. That the occupant had taken care to conceal himself, heavy sheets of brown paper pasted over the panes of all the windows—including that which Trant had found open—testified; that the occupant had been well tended, a full tray of food practically untouched and the stubs of at least a hundred cigarettes flung in the fireplace made plain. These things Trant appreciated only after the first swift glance, which showed him a huddled figure with its head under a musty lounge that stood farthest from the window. The figure was a man's, and the mother's shuddering cry of recognition identified him as Walter Newberry.

Trant knelt beside the officers working over the body; the blood had been flowing from a bullet wound in the temple, but it had ceased to flow. A small, silver-mounted automatic revolver, obviously a woman's weapon, lay on the floor, with the shells which had been ejected as it was fired. The psychologist rose.

"We have come too late," he said, simply, to the father. "It was necessary, as he foresaw, to get here before eleven, if we were to help him. He is dead. And now—" he checked himself, as the little woman clutched her husband and buried her face in his sleeve, and the little man stared up at him with a chalky face—"it will be better for you to wait somewhere else till we are through here."

"In the name of mercy, Mr. Trant," Newberry cried, miserably, as the psychologist picked up a lamp and lighted the two old people into the hall, "what is this terrible thing that has happened here? What is it—oh, what is it, Mr. Trant? And where—where is Adele?"

"I am here, father; I am here!" a new voice broke clearly and calmly through the confusion, and the light of Trant's lamp fell on a slender girl advancing down the hallway. "And you," she said as composedly to the psychologist, in spite of the pallor which increased as she met his eyes, "are Mr. Trant—and you came too late!"

"You are Mrs. Walter Newberry?" Trant returned. "You called me up this morning and this afternoon?"

"Yes," she said. "And he is dead! You came too late."

She did not see the quick glance Trant gave to assure himself that she had spoken before she could have seen the body from her place in the hall.

"Yes, dear father and dear mother!" she began compassionately. "Walter came back—" she broke off suddenly, her eyes staring over Trant's shoulder at Siler, who had come to the doorway. "You—you brought the police, Mr. Trant! I—I thought you had nothing to do with the police!"

"Never mind that," the plain-clothes man checked Trant's answer. "You were saying your husband came home, Mrs. Newberry?"

"Then—but that is all I know; I know nothing whatever about it."

"How did you get your shoes and skirt wet, Mrs. Newberry?" The plain-clothes man pointed at her dragged garments.

"I—I heard the shots! That was all. I ran to the neighbors' for help; but I could get no one."

"Then you'll have a chance to make your statement later," Siler answered in a business-like tone. "Just now you'd better look after your father and mother."

He took the lamp from Trant and held it to light them down the hall, then turned swiftly to the patrolman. "She is going upstairs with them; watch the front stairs and see that she does not go out. If she comes down the back stairs, we can see her."

As the patrolman went out, the plain-clothes man turned back into the room, leaving the door ajar so that the rear stairs were visible. "These husband-and-wife cases, Mr. Trant!" he said, easily. "The man thinks the woman will stand everything; and she does—till he does one thing too much. Then, all of a sudden, she lets him have it!"

"Don't you think it's a bit premature," the psychologist suggested, "to assume that she killed him?"

"Didn't you see how she shut up when she saw me?" Siler's eyes met Trant's with a flash of opposition. "That was because she recognized me. I've been here before. It's a

cinch! Regular minister's son, he was. The old man's a missionary, you know; spent his life till two years ago trying to turn Chinese heathen into Christians. And this Walter—our station blotter'd be black with his doings; only, ever since he made China too hot to hold him and the old man brought him back here, everything's been hushed up on the old man's account. But I happen to have been here before; and all winter I've known there'd be a killing if he ever came back. I tell you it was a relief to me to see it was him on the floor when that door went down! There are no powder marks, you see"—the officer pointed to the wound in the head of the form beside the lounge. "He could not have shot himself. He was shot from farther off than he could reach. Besides, it's on the left side."

"Yes; I see," Trant replied.

"And that little automatic gun," the officer stopped and picked up the pistol that lay on the floor beside the body, "is hers. I saw it the last time I was called in here."

"But how could he have known—if she shot him—that she was going to kill him just at eleven?" Trant objected pulling from his pocket the note which old Mr. Newberry had returned to him and handing it to Siler. "He sent that to me; at least, the father says it is in his handwriting."

"You mean," Siler's eyes rose slowly from the paper, "that she must have told him what she was going to do—premeditated murder?"

"I mean that the first fact which we have—and which certainly seems to me wholly incompatible with anything which you have suggested so far—is that Walter Newberry foresaw his own death and set the hour of its accomplishment; and that his wife—it is plain, at least, to me—when she telephoned so often for me to-day, was trying to help him to escape from it. Now what are the other facts?" Trant went on rapidly. "I distinctly heard five shots—four together and then, after a second or so, one. You heard five?"

"Yes."

"And five shots," the psychologist's quick glance had been taking in the finer details of the room, "are accounted for by the bullet holes—one on the woodwork of the window I found open; one on the plaster there to the side; one under the molding there, four feet to the right; and one more, in the plaster almost as far to the left. The one that killed him makes five."

"Exactly!" Siler followed Trant's indication, "the fifth in his head! The first four went off in their struggle and then she got away and, with the fifth, shot him."

"But the shells," Trant continued. "That sort of revolver ejects the shells as they are fired and I see only four. Where is the fifth?"

"You're trying to fog this thing all up, Mr. Trant!"

"No; I'm trying to clear it. How could anyone have left the room after the firing of the last shot? No one could have

gone through the door and not been seen by us in the hall; besides, the door was bolted on the inside." Trant pointed to the two bolts. "No one could have left except by the window which was open when we came in. You remember I went at once to it and looked out. I saw nothing. The window is barred, but that might not prevent escape through it."

Trant recrossed the room swiftly and threw the window open, intently reëxamining it. On the outside it was barred with a heavy grating, but he saw that the key to the grating was in the lock.

"Try your flash-light," he said to the plain-clothes man; Siler shot its rays against the grating, and continued: "Look at the ice cracked from it. It must have been swung open. He must have gone out this way!"

The plain-clothes man had squeezed past Trant, as the grating swung back, and flash in hand had let himself easily down to the ice-covered walk below the window, and was holding his light, shielded, just above the ground. "It was she," he cried, triumphantly. "The woman, as I told you! Look at her marks here!" He showed the double, sharp little semicircles of a woman's high heels cut into the ice; and, as Trant dropped down beside him, the police detective followed the sharp little heel marks to the side door of the house where they turned and led into the kitchen entry.

"Premature, was I—eh?" Siler triumphed, laconically. "We are used to these cases, Mr. Trant; we know what to expect in 'em."

Trant stood for an instant studying the sheet of ice. In this sheltered spot, freezing had not progressed so fast as in the open streets. Here, as an hour before on Michigan Avenue, he saw that his heels and those of the police officer cut through the crust at every step, while their toes left no mark. But except for the marks they themselves had made and the crescent stamp of the woman's high heels leading in sharp, clear outline from the window to the side steps of the house, there were no other imprints. Then he followed the detective in by the side door.

In the passage they met the patrolman. "She came downstairs just now," said that officer, "and went in here."

Siler laid his hand on the door of the little sitting room the patrolman indicated, but turned to speak a terse command to the man over his shoulder: "Go back to that room and see that things are kept as they are. Look for the fifth shell. We got four; find the other!"

Then, with a warning glance at Trant, he pushed the door open.

The girl faced the two calmly as they entered; but the whiteness of her lips showed that she was reaching the end of her control.

"You've had a little while to think this over, Mrs. Newberry," the plain-clothes man said, not unkindly, "and I guess you've seen it's best to make a clean breast of it. Mr. Walter Newberry has been in that room quite a while—the

room shows it—though his father and mother seem not to have known about it."

"He—" she hesitated, then answered suddenly and collectedly—"he had been there six days."

"You started to tell us about it," Trant helped her. "You said 'Walter came home.' What brought him here? Did he come to see you?"

"No." The girl's pale cheeks suddenly burned blood red and then went white again, as she made her decision. "It was fear—deadly fear that drove him here; but I do not know of what."

"You are going to tell us all you know, are you not, Mrs. Newberry?" the psychologist urged, quietly; "how he came here and how both he and you could so foresee his death that you summoned me as you did!"

"Yes; yes—I will tell you," the girl returned, resolutely. "Six nights ago, Monday night, Mr. Trant, Walter came here. He waked me by throwing pieces of ice and frozen sod against my window. I went down and talked to him through the closed door—the side door here. I was afraid at first to let him in, in spite of his promises not to hurt me. He told me his very life was in danger, and he had no other place to go; he must hide here—hide; and I must not let anyone—not even mother or father—know he had come back; that I was the only one he could trust! So—he was my husband—I let him in. He ran at once into the old billiard room—the storeroom there—and tried the locks of the door and the window

gratings, and then threw himself all sweating cold on the lounge, and went to sleep in a stupor. In the morning when he woke up, I saw it wasn't whisky or opium, but it was fear—fear—fear, such as I'd never seen before. He rolled off the couch and half hid under it till I'd pasted brown paper over the window panes—there were no curtains. But he wouldn't tell me what he was afraid of.

"As the days went by, he couldn't sleep at all; he walked the floor all the time and he smoked continually, so that nearly every day I had to slip out and get him cigarettes. He got more and more afraid of every noise outside and of every little sound within; and it made him so much worse when I told him I must tell some one else—at least his mother—that I didn't dare. He said if I did he would be killed. He was always worse at eleven o'clock at night; and he dreaded especially eleven o'clock Sunday night—though I couldn't find out why!

"I gave him my pistol—the one you saw on the floor in there. That was Friday; and he had been getting worse and worse all the time. Eleven o'clock every night I managed to be with him; and no one found us out. I never thought that he might use the pistol to kill himself until this morning; but when I came to him this morning he was talking about it. 'I shan't shoot myself!' I heard him saying over and over again, as I stood outside. 'They can't make me shoot myself! I shan't! I shan't'—over and over, like that. And when he had let me in and I saw him, then I knew—I knew he meant to do it! He asked me if it wasn't Sunday; and went whiter when I told him it was! So then I told him he had to trust some one now, this couldn't go on, and I spoke to him about Mr. Trant.

He said he'd try him and he wrote the letter I mailed you—special delivery—so you could come when his father and mother were out—but he never once let go my pistol; he was wild—wild with fear. Every time I could get away to the telephone, I tried to get Mr. Trant; and the last time I got back—it was awful! It was hardly ten, but he was walking up and down with my pistol in his hand, whispering strange things over and over to himself: 'No one can make me do it! No one can make me do it—even when it's eleven—even when it's eleven!'—and staring—staring at his watch which he'd taken out and laid on the table. I knew I must get some one before eleven—and at last I was running next door for help—for anyone—for anything—when—when I heard the shots—I heard the shots!"

She sank forward and buried her face in her hands, rent by tearless sobs. Her fingers, white from the pressure, made long marks on her cheeks, showing livid even in the pallor of her face. But Siler laid his hand upon her arm, sternly.

"Steady, steady, Mrs. Newberry!" the plain clothes man warned. "You cannot do that now! You say you were with your husband a moment before the shooting but you were not in the room when he was killed?"

"Yes; yes!" the woman cried.

"You went out the door the last time?"

"The door? Yes; yes; of course the door. Why not the door?"

"Because, Mrs. Newberry," the detective replied, impressively, "just at, or a moment after, the time of the shooting, a woman left that room by the window—unlocked the grating and went out the window. We have seen her marks. And you were that woman, Mrs. Newberry!"

The girl gasped and her eyes wavered to Trant; but she recovered herself quickly.

"Of course! Why, of course!" she cried. "The last time I did go out of the window! It was to get the neighbors—didn't I tell you? So I went out the window!"

"Yes; we know you went out the window, Mrs. Newberry," Siler responded, mercilessly. "But we know, too, you did not even start for the neighbors. We have traced your tracks on the ice straight to the side door and into the house! Now, Mrs. Newberry, you've tried to make us believe that your husband killed himself. But that won't do! Isn't it a little too strange, if you left by the window while your husband was still alive, that he let the window stay open and the grating unlocked? Yes; it's altogether too strange. You left him dead; and what we want to know—and I'm asking you straight out—is how you did it?"

"How I did it?" the girl repeated, mechanically; then with sharp agony and starting eyes: "How I did it! Oh, no, no, I did not do it! I was there—I have not told all the truth! But when I saw you," her horrified gaze rested on Siler, "and remembered you had been here before when he—he threatened me, my only thought was to hide, for his sake and for his parents', that he had tried to carry out his threat. For

before he killed himself, he tried to kill me! That's how he fired those first four shots. He tried to kill me first!"

"Well, we're getting nearer to it," Siler approved.

"Yes; now I have told you all!" the girl cried. "Oh, I have now—I have! The last time he let me in, it was almost eleven—eleven! He had my pistol in his hand, waiting! And at last he cried out it was eleven; and he raised the pistol and shot straight at me—with the face—the face of a demon mad with fear. I fell on my knees before him, just as he shot at me again and again—aiming straight, not at my eyes, but at my hair; and he shot again! But again he missed me; and his face—his face was so terrible that—that I covered my own face as he aimed at me again, staring always at my hair. And that time, when he shot, I heard him fall and saw—saw that he had shot himself and he was dead!

"Then I heard your footsteps coming to the door; and I saw for the first time that Walter had opened the window before I came in. And—all without thinking of anything except that if I was found there everybody would know he'd tried to kill me—I took up the key to the grating from the table where he had laid it, and went out!"

"I can't force you to confess, if you will not, Mrs. Newberry," Siler said, meaningly, "though no jury, after they learned how he had threatened you, would convict you if you pleaded self-defense. We know he didn't kill himself; for he couldn't have fired that shot! The case is complete, I think," the detective shot a glance at Trant, "unless Mr. Trant wants to ask you something more."

"I do!" Trant spoke for the first time. "I want to ask Mrs. Newberry—since she did not actually see her husband fire the last shot that killed him—whether she was directly facing him as she knelt. It is most essential to know whether or not her head was turned to one side."

"Why, what do you mean, Mr. Trant?"

"Suppose he might have shot himself before her, as she says—what's the difference whether she heard him with her head straight or her head turned?" the police detective demanded, sneeringly.

"A fundamental difference in this case, Siler," Trant replied, "if taken in connection with that other most important factor of all—that Walter Newberry foretold the hour of his own death. But answer me, Mrs. Newberry—if you can be certain."

"I—certainly—I can never forget—I was facing him," the girl answered.

"That is very important!" The psychologist took a rapid turn or two up and down the room. "Now you told us that your husband talked to himself continuously, repeating over and over again such sentences as 'No one can make me do it!' Can you remember any others?"

"I couldn't make out anything else, Mr. Trant," the girl replied after thinking an instant. "He seemed to have hallucinations so much of the time."

"Hallucinations?"

"Yes; he seemed to think I was singing to him—as I used to sing to him, you know, when we were first married—and he would catch hold of me and say 'Don't—don't—don't sing!' Or at other times he would tell me to sing low—sing low!"

"Anything else?"

"Nothing else even so sensible as that," the girl responded. "Many things he said made me think he had lost his mind. He would often stare at me in an absorbed way, looking over me from head to foot, and say, 'Look here; if anyone asks you—anyone at all—whether your mother had large or small feet, say small—never admit she had large feet, or you'll never get in.'"

"What?" The psychologist stood for several moments in deep thought. "What! He said that?"

"A dozen times at least, Mr. Trant," the girl replied, staring at him, startled.

"This is extraordinary!" Trant strode up and down. "Nobody could have hoped for so fortunate a clew. We knew that Walter Newberry foresaw his own death; now we actually get from him himself, the key—possibly the complete explanation of his danger."

"Explanation!" shouted the police detective. "I've heard no explanation! You're throwing an impressive bluff, Mr. Trant; but I've heard nothing yet to make me doubt that Newberry

met his death at the hands of his wife; and I arrest her for his murder!"

"I can't prevent your arresting Mrs. Newberry." Trant turned to look at the police officer. "But I can tell you—if you care to hear it—how Walter Newberry died! He was not shot by his wife; he did not die by his own hand, as she believes and has told you. The fifth shot—you have not found the fifth shell yet, Siler; and you will not find it!—for it was not fired either by Walter Newberry or his wife. As she knelt, blinding her eyes as she faced her husband, Mrs. Newberry could not know whether the fifth shot sounded in front or behind her. If her head was not turned to one side, as she says it was not, then—and this is a simple psychological fact, Siler—it would be impossible for her to distinguish between sounds directly ahead and directly behind. It was not at her—at her hair—that her husband fired the four shots whose empty shells we found, but over her head at the window directly behind her. And it was through this just opened window that the fifth shot came and killed him—the shot at eleven o'clock—which he had foreseen and dreaded!"

"You must think I'm easy, Mr. Trant," said the police officer. "You can't clear her by dragging into this business some third person who never existed, and who left no traces _____"

"Traces!" Trant echoed. "If you mean marks on the window sill and the floor, I cannot show you any. But the murderer did leave, of course, one trace which in the end will probably prove final, even to you, Siler. The shell of the fifth shot is missing because he carried it away in his revolver.

But the bullet—only by a most remarkable coincidence, Siler, will you find the bullet which killed young Newberry the same as the four shot from his wife's automatic revolver!"

"But the ice—the ice under the window!" shouted the detective. "There were no heel marks but his wife's and there would have been others if anyone had stood outside the window to fire through it."

"When you have reached the point, Siler," said Trant, more quietly, "where you can think of some class of men who would have left no heel marks, but who could have produced the effect on young Newberry's mind which his wife has described, you will have gone far toward the discovery of the real murderer of Walter Newberry. In the meantime, I have clues enough; and I hope to find help to enable me to bring the murderer to justice. I will ask you, Mrs. Newberry," he glanced toward the girl, "to let me have a photograph of your husband, or—" he hesitated, unable to tell from her manner whether she had heard him—"I will stop on my way out to ask for his photograph from his father."

He glanced once more from the detective to the pale girl who, since she received notice of her arrest, had stood as though cut from marble. Then he left them.

The next morning's papers, which carried startling headlines of the murder of Walter Newberry, brought Police Detective Siler a feeling of satisfaction with his own work. The newspaper accounts were elaborations of his own theory

of an attack by the missionary's dissipated son on his wife and her shooting him in self-defense.

Even the discovery on the second morning that the bullet which was removed from young Newberry's body was of 38 caliber and, as Trant had predicted, not at all similar to the steel-jacketed 32-caliber bullets shot by Mrs. Newberry's automatic pistol, did not disturb the police officer's self-confidence. And when, on the day following, Siler received orders to report, at an hour when he was not ordinarily on duty, at the West End police station, he pushed open the door of the captain's room, to which the sharp nod of the desk sergeant had directed him, with an air of confident importance.

The room had three occupants—the huge figure of Division Inspector of Police Walker, a slight, dark man unknown to Siler, and Luther Trant at the end of the room busy arranging a somewhat complicated apparatus.

Trant, with a short nod of greeting, at once called Siler to his aid.

With the detective's half-suspicious, half-respectful assistance, the psychologist stretched across the end of the room a white sheet about ten feet long, three feet high, and divided into ten rectangles by nine vertical lines. Opposite this, and upon a table about ten feet away, he set up a small electrical contrivance consisting of two magnets and wire coils supporting a small, round mirror about an inch in diameter and so delicately suspended that it turned at the slightest current passing through the coils below it. In front

of this little mirror Trant placed a shaded electric lamp in such a position that its light was reflected from the mirror upon the sheet at the end of the room. Then he arranged a carbon plate and a zinc plate on the edge of the table; set a single cell battery under the table; connected the battery with the coils controlling the mirror, and connected them also with the zinc and carbon plates.

When his preparations were complete, Trant rested his hands lightly on the plates upon the table; and as he did so a slight and in fact imperceptible current passed through him from the battery; but it was enough to move the light spot reflected upon the screen.

"This apparatus," the psychologist said, as he saw even Walker stare at this result, "is the newest electric psychometer—or 'the soul machine,' as it is already becoming popularly known. It is probably the most delicate and efficient instrument contrived for detecting and registering human emotions—such as anxiety, fear, and the sense of guilt. Like the galvanometer which you saw me use to catch Caylis, the Bronson murderer, in the first case where I worked with the police, Inspector Walker,"—the psychologist turned to his tall friend—"this psychometer—which is really an improved and much more spectacular galvanometer—is already in use by physicians to get the truth from patients when they don't want to tell it. No man can control the automatic reflexes which this apparatus was particularly designed to register, when he is examined with his hands merely resting upon these two plates!

"As you see," he placed his hands in the test position again, "these are arranged so that the very slight current passing through my arms, so slight that I cannot feel it at all, moves that mirror and swings the reflected light upon the screen according to the amount of current coming through me. As you see now, the light stays almost steady in the center of the screen, because the amount of current coming through me is very slight. I am not under any stress or emotion of any sort. But if I were confronted suddenly with an object to arouse fear—if, for instance, it reminded me of a crime I was trying to conceal—I might be able to control every other evidence of my fright, but I could not control the involuntary sweating of my glands and the automatic changes in the blood pressure which allow the electric current to flow more freely through me. The light would then register immediately the amount of my emotion by the distance it swung along the screen. But I will give you a much more perfect demonstration of the instrument during the next half hour while I am making the test that I have planned to determine the murderer of Walter Newberry."

"You mean," cried Siler, "you are going to test the woman?"

"I might have thought it necessary to test Mrs. Newberry," Trant answered, "if the evidence at the house of the presence of a third person who was the murderer had not been so plain as to make any test of her unnecessary."

"Then you—you still stick to that?"

"Thanks to Mr. Ferris, who is a special agent of the United States Government," Trant motioned to the slight, dark man who was the fourth member of the party, "I have been able to fix upon four men, one of whom, I feel absolutely certain, shot and killed young Newberry through the window of the billiard room that night. Inspector Walker has had all four arrested and brought here. Mr. Ferris' experience and thorough knowledge enabled me to lay my hands on them much more easily than I had hoped, though I was able to go to him with information which would have made their detection almost certain sooner or later."

"You mean information you got at the house?" asked Siler, somewhat bewildered.

"Just so, Siler; and it was as much at your disposal as mine," Trant replied. "It seemed to mean nothing to you that Walter Newberry knew the hour at which he was to die—which made it seem more like an execution than a murder; or that in his terror he raved that 'he would not do it, that they could not make him do it,' plainly meaning commit suicide. Perhaps you don't know that it is an Oriental custom, under certain conditions, to allow a man who has been sentenced to death the alternative of carrying out the decree upon himself before a certain day and hour that has been decided upon! But certainly his ravings, as told us by his wife, ought to have given you a clew, if you had heard only that sentence which she believed an injunction not to sing loudly, but which was in reality; a name—Sing Lo!"

"Then—it was a Chinaman!" cried Siler.

"It could hardly have been any other sort of man, Siler. For there is no other to whom it could be commended as a matter of such vital importance whether his mother had small feet or large, as was shown in the other sentence Mrs. Newberry repeated to us. It was that sentence that sent me to Mr. Ferris."

"I see—I see!" exclaimed the crestfallen detective. "But if it was a Chinaman you'll never get the truth out of him."

"I know, Siler," Trant answered, "that it is absolutely hopeless to expect a confession from a Chinaman; they are so accustomed to control the obvious signs of fear, guilt, the slightest trace or hint of emotion, even under the most rigid examination, that it has come to be regarded as a characteristic of the race. But the new psychology does not deal with those obvious signs; it deals with the involuntary reactions in the blood and glands which are common to all men alike—even to Chinamen! We have in here," the psychologist glanced toward an inner room, "the four Chinamen—Wong Bo, Billy Lee, Sing Lo, and Sin Chung Ming.

"My first test is to see which of them—if any—was acquainted with Walter Newberry; and next who, if any of them, knew where he lived. For this purpose I have brought here Newberry's photograph and a view of his father's house, which I had taken yesterday." He stooped to one of his suit cases, and took out first a dozen photographs of young men, among them Newberry's, and about twenty views of different houses, among which was the Newberry house. "If you are ready, Inspector, I will go ahead with the test."

The Inspector threw open the door of the inner room, showing the four Celestials in a group, and summoned first Wong Bo, who spoke English.

Trant, pushing a chair to the table, ordered the Oriental to sit down and place his hands upon the plates at the table's edge before him. The Chinaman obeyed passively, as if expecting some sort of torture. Immediately the light moved to the center of the screen, where it had moved when Trant was touching the plates, then kept on toward the next line beyond. But as Wong Bo's first suspicious excitement—which the movement of the light betrayed—subsided, the light returned to the center of the screen.

"You know why you have been brought here, Wong Bo?" Trant demanded.

"No," the Chinaman answered, shortly, the light moving six inches as he did so.

"You know no reason at all why you should be brought here?"

"No," the Chinaman answered, calmly again, while the light moved about six inches. Trant waited till it returned to its normal position in the center of the screen.

"Do you know an American named Paul Tobin, Wong Bo?"

"No," the Chinaman answered. This time the light remained stationary.

"Nor one named Ralph Murray?"

"No," Still the light stayed stationary.

"Hugh Larkin, Wong Bo?"

"No," calmly again, and with the light quiet in the center of the screen.

"Walter Newberry?" the psychologist asked in precisely the same tone as he had put the preceding question.

"No," the Chinaman answered, laconically again; but before he answered and almost before the name was off Trant's lips, the light jumped quickly to one side across the screen, crossed the first division line and moved on toward the second and stayed there. It had moved over a foot! But the face of the Oriental was as quiet, patient, and impassive as before. The psychologist made no comment; but waited for the light slowly to return to its normal position. Then he took up his pile of portrait photographs.

"You say you do not know any of these men, Wong Bo," Trant said, quietly. "You may know them, but not by name, so I want you to look at these pictures." Trant showed him the first. "Do you know that man, Wong Bo?"

"No," the Chinaman answered, patiently. The light remained steady. Four more pictures of young men elicited the same answer and precisely the same effect. The sixth picture was the photograph of Walter Newberry.

"You know him?" Trant asked.

"No," Wong Bo answered with precisely the same patient impassiveness. Not a muscle of his face changed nor an eyelash quivered; but as soon as Trant had displayed this picture and the Chinaman's eyes fell upon it, the light on the screen again jumped a space and settled near the second line to the left!

Trant put aside the portraits and took up the pictures of the houses. He waited again till the light slowly resumed its central position on the screen.

"You have never gone to this house, Wong Bo?" He showed a large, stone mansion, not at all like the Newberry's.

"No," the Chinaman replied, impassive as ever. The light remained steady.

"Nor to this—or this—or this?" Trant showed three more with the same result. "Nor this?" He displayed now a rear view of the Newberry house.

The light swung swiftly to one side and stood trembling, again a foot and a half to the left of its normal position as the Chinaman replied quietly, "No."

"That will do for the present." Trant dismissed Wong Bo. "Send him back to his cell, away from the others. We will try the rest—in turn!"

Rapidly he examined Billy Lee and Sing Lo. Each man made precisely the same denials and in the same manner as Wong Bo, and on each case the result was the same, the light was steady, until Walter Newberry's name was mentioned

and his picture shown. Then it swung wide. The picture of the house, however, had no effect on them.

"Bring in Sin Chung Ming!" the psychologist commanded. Trant set the yellow hands over the plates and started his questions in the same quiet tone as before. For the first two questions the light moved three times, as it had done with the others—and as even Ferris and Siler now seemed to be expecting it to move—only this time it seemed even to the police officers to swing a little wider. And at Walter Newberry's name, for the first time in any of the tests, it crossed the second dividing line at the first impulse, moved toward the third and stayed there.

Even Siler now waited with bated breath, as Trant took up the pile of pictures; and, as he came to the picture of the murdered man and the house where he had lived, for the second and third time in that single test the light—stationary when Sin Chung Ming glanced at the other photographs—trembled across the screen to the third dividing line. For the others it had moved hardly eighteen inches, but when Sin Chung Ming saw the pictured face of the murdered man it had swung almost three feet.

"Inspector Walker," Trant drew the giant officer aside, "this is the man, I think, for the final test. You will carry it out as I arranged with you?"

"Sin Chung Ming," the psychologist turned back to the Chinaman swiftly, as the inspector, without comment, left the room, "you have been watching the little light have you not? You saw it move? It moved when you lied, Sin Chung Ming!

It will always move when you lie. It moved when you said you did not know Walter Newberry; it moved when you said you did not recognize his picture; it moved when you said you did not know his house. Look how it is moving now, as you grow afraid that you have betrayed your secret to us, Sin Chung Ming—as you have and will." Trant pointed to the swirling light in triumph.

A low knock sounded on the door, but Trant, watching the light now slowly returning to its normal place, waited an instant more. Then he himself rapped gently on the table. The door to the next room—directly opposite the Chinaman's eyes—swung slowly open, and through it they could see the scene which Trant and the inspector had prepared. In the middle of the floor knelt young Mrs. Newberry, her back toward them, her hands pressed against her face; and six feet beyond a man stood, facing her. It was a reproduction of the scene of the murder in the billiard room of the Newberry house. Siler and Ferris stirred and stared swiftly, first at the Chinaman's passionless and immobile face; then at the light upon the screen, and saw it leap across bar after bar: The Chinaman saw it, and knew that it was betraying him, but it leaped and leaped again; swung wider and wider; until at last the impassiveness of the Celestial's attitude was broken, and Sin Chung Ming snatched his hands from the metal plates.

"I had guessed that, anyway, Sin Chung Ming," Trant swiftly closed the door, as Walker returned to the room. "So it was you that fired the shot, after watching the house with Wong Bo, as his fright when he saw the picture of the house showed, while Billy Lee and Sing Lo were not needed at the house that night and had never seen it, though they knew

what was to be done. That is all I need of you now, Sin Chung Ming; for I have learned what I wanted to know."

As the fourth of the Chinamen was led away to his cell, Trant turned back to Inspector Walker and Siler.

"I must acknowledge my debt to Mr. Ferris," he said, "for help in solving this case. Mr. Ferris, as you already know, Inspector Walker, as special agent for the Government, has for years been engaged in the enforcement of the Chinese exclusion laws. The sentence repeated to us by Mrs. Newberry, in which her husband, delirious with fright, seemed warning some one that to acknowledge that his mother had large feet would prevent him from 'getting in,' seemed to me to establish a connection between young Newberry's terror and an evasion of the exclusion laws. I went at once to Mr. Ferris to test this idea, and he recognized its application at once.

"As the exclusion laws against all but a very small class of Chinese are being more strictly enforced than ever before, there has been a large and increasing traffic among the Chinese in bogus papers to procure the entry into this country of Chinese belonging to the excluded classes. The applicants of the classes excluded are supplied with regular 'coaching papers' so that they can correctly answer the questions asked them at San Francisco or Seattle. The injunction to 'say your mother had small feet' was recognized at once by Ferris as one of the instructions of the 'coaching papers' to get a laborer entered as a man of the merchant class.

"Mr. Ferris and I together investigated the career of Walter Newberry after his return from China, where he had spent nearly the whole of his life, and we were able to establish, as we expected we might, a connection between him and the Sing Lo Trading Company—a Chinese company which Mr. Ferris had long suspected of dealing in fraudulent admission papers, though he had never been able to bring home to them any proof. We found, also, that young Newberry had spent and gambled away much more money in the last few months than he had legitimately received. And we were able to make certain that this money had come to him through the Sing Lo Company, though obviously not for such uses. As it is not an uncommon thing for Chinese engaged in the fraudulent bringing in of their countrymen to confide part of the business to unprincipled Americans—especially as all papers have to be visaed by American consuls and disputes settled in American courts—we became certain that young Newberry had been serving the Sing Lo Company in this capacity. It was plain that he had purloined a large amount of money, and his actions, as described by his wife, made it equally certain that he had been sentenced by the members of the company to death, and given the Oriental alternative of committing suicide before eleven o'clock on Sunday night. Now whether it will be possible to convict all four of the Chinamen we had here for complicity in his murder, or whether Sin Chung Ming, who fired the shot, will be the only one tried, I do not know."

"I doubt whether, under the circumstances, any force could be brought to bear that would extort any formal confession from these Chinamen." The Government agent shook his

head. "They would lose their 'face' and with it all reputation among their countrymen."

At this instant the door of the room was opened, and the flushed face of the desk sergeant appeared before them.

"Inspector!" he cried, sharply. "The chink's dead! The last one, Sin Chung Ming, choked himself as soon as he was alone in his cell!"

"What? Ah—I see!" the immigration officer comprehended after an instant. "He considered what we learned from him here confession enough—especially since he implicated the others with him—so that his 'face' was lost. To him, it was unpardonable weakness to let us find what we did. I think, then, Mr. Trant," he concluded, quietly, "that you can safely consider your case settled. His suicide is proof that Sin Chung Ming believed he had confessed."

THE END

[The end of *The Eleventh Hour* by Edwin Balmer and William B. MacHarg]