

The Casey Files

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESSEY
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CHAPTER XXXI—Continued.
"The papers from the safe, did you say?" asked Helena in a low voice.
"Perhaps you know that I was imprisoned in the room under. It took me three hours to loosen the bar of the window. I made my way round the sleeping room of the tower by the stone gutter to the window of that other room. The window was open. When I gained it, and was about to enter it, I saw this man, whom I believed to be your brother, enter the room, bolt the door behind him, kneel at the safe, open it, and abstract from it a packet of papers which he now has in his pocket."
"If Forbes had expected Helena to be dumfounded at this surprising news, his wish was gratified. But it was wonder tempered with infinite joy. The papers that convicted her brother of guilt had been placed in her hands. The cruel clutch of Madame de Varrier, she did not realize at once that I had steeled clear of Charly's will to fall foul to Scylla. The peril of Sir Mortimer's guilt being known was not infinitely greater than it had been half an hour ago. Helena's defense of myself, and Madame de Varrier's untimely interruption, had both alienated all sympathy from me. My own strengthened conviction that I was one of the conspirators.
"If I had kept silent so long, if it seems unmanly that I should have allowed a woman to plead for my behalf—it is because I was reckless, yearning for a means of escape from the awkward predicament that held me captive."
"I have told you, Captain Forbes, that I have ample reason to believe in the honesty of Mr. Haddon. If he has taken any papers from the safe, it is with my fullest and deepest gratitude. It was the woman who stole them, the stolen them from my brother. They are personal papers. They concern only my mother and myself now that Mortimer is dead. Mr. Haddon will restore them to me."
"I shall forbid that," protested Forbes hotly. "I tell you, Miss Brett, those are papers of State. They belong to the State. I must see that they are placed in the hands of the ministers of the Great Open Gate. For the last time, give me those papers."
I leaped at the loophole Helena had offered me. If I could not prevent their falling into the hands of Forbes, at least I could delay that time. "I shall obey you, Miss Brett. Into your hands alone shall I place those papers."
"If you please," she said with dignity and held out that did not tremble to receive them.
And still I hesitated. I saw the gleam of resolution in the glitter of Forbes' blue eyes. If I produced the papers now it would be only to have the king's messenger snatch them from my grasp. Forbes turned to Helena in angry triumph.
"You see, Miss Brett, he hesitates. The woman and himself are reluctant that the papers fall into your hands as they are that I obtain them. He thinks that he may trick you, as he has already once tricked me. Is there nothing I can say to shake your blind confidence in this treacherous impostor?"
"Nothing," said Helena, with resolution; but I could see her troubled surprise at my reticence.
"Then I shall be forced to resort to violence. I am going to have those papers, and at once. If you are so blind to the grave danger of letting this man keep the papers, even for the moment, I am not the only one who has taken them from the safe unless it were with the permission and perhaps at the entreaty of this Madame de Varrier."
"The inference is clear enough. I should think—she must have left the door of the safe open."
Helena spoke confidently, but trust in me had been put to a sore test. "Your credulity is very great. If you think that. Why, madam, I have deliberately work the combination of the safe."
Helena uttered a cry of horror at my supposed treachery. Her trust was shattered.
"I could not dream of a villainous so hypocritical."
Instinctively she came close to Forbes' side as if for protection. She had read in my eyes that Forbes spoke the truth. No words of mine could convince her now of my sincerity.
Madame de Varrier had been quite forgotten by us all. Until now she had been listening to the words of Helena. Forbes' declaration that I had taken the papers must have seemed to her the sheerest absurdity. She had been certain that she had locked the safe; she was equally certain that no one but herself knew the word by which it might be opened. She must have thought, too, that my tacit confession of taking the papers was a ruse to deceive her, though she could not guess its purpose.
But when Captain Forbes asserted with evident sincerity that he had seen me working the combination her anxiety became understandable. At the risk of being surprised at the safe, she had

stolen quietly to the room, thinking herself unobserved. But through our backs had been turned from the room. I had seen her movement by her shadow cast on the floor by the setting sun pouring in the open window through which Captain Forbes had made his entrance.
I clutched the arm of the king's messenger; I made an imperious gesture for caution and silence. I pointed to Madame de Varrier disappearing into the door of the room of the safe. With a motion incredibly light for so heavy a man Forbes lifted after her, and watched her open the safe through the half-closed door.
"It was only a question of instants before she had thrown open the door of the safe with a cry of dismay. But that instant sufficed.
As Forbes turned his back to me I took swiftly from my pocket the two packets. One envelope was plain, with no writing on it. The other was addressed to Sir Mortimer Brett and bore a foreign stamp.
No word was spoken. I had but to hold the two packets before Helena. In an instant she had taken the bosom of her dress the first packet I have mentioned, whose envelope was plain; the other I returned to my pocket.
Madame de Varrier sprang to her feet with the litheness of a tigress. She came toward me as I stood by

"And they speak of honor among thieves!" he sneered in an aside to Helena.
I feared that Helena might make an indignified protest. But she said nothing. I supposed her silence dictated by prudence; this was no time to discuss my cause. But as I looked at her I read her perplexity in her troubled eyes. I had given her back the papers indeed, but that I should have known the combination was too startling a fact to be accepted without distrust. I could have known the combination only from Madame de Varrier; that proved to me that she had been in her confidence. If I had repeated and betrayed my accomplices in my remorse, she was grateful for the act itself, but she could no longer trust me.
"As this woman says," Forbes was speaking to me, "there is nothing to be done but to wait. But you, sir, as well as this woman, will leave this room only to be placed under arrest. You must consider yourself my prisoner."
With these words he strode toward the door of the staircase, and turned the handle.
"It is locked," he said sternly. "Who has the key?"
I handed it to him in silence. As he received it from me he glanced meaningfully toward Helena. It was one more link in the chain of evidence. I confess I could have wished the key had not been in my pocket.
He turned the key. To the consternation of all of us the door still resisted his efforts. He exerted all his strength to no purpose.
"What new trick is this?" he demanded furiously of me.
"I think," it was Madame de Varrier I answered, "that Dr. Starva has taken the precaution of insuring himself a free field."
CHAPTER XXXI.
The Ladder of Stones.
Madame de Varrier had been seized as sudden as a thief. At my words she

"Mr. Haddon, it is hard to believe you guilty of treachery. In spite of everything, I wish to keep faith with you. But will you not explain to Captain Forbes?"
"No, Miss Brett." I returned bluntly. "I shall make no explanation to Captain Forbes until he sees fit to ask me to do so."
"And I should refuse to believe any," said Forbes with contempt. "You say your brother is in that room. May I see him?"
She led the way to the gateway in silence. The door closed gently behind them. Madame de Varrier and I were alone.
"You are so satisfied, monsieur, with your adventure in the Castle of Happiness," she said with a hysterical sob.
"I am waiting for the climax," I answered significantly. "It is to be a comedy or a tragedy?"
"Oh, God!" she raised her clenched hands in a gesture full of anguish. "It is I who am asking that."
"You look at me in that manner. You wish to tell me something—to warn me."
"The death-mess!" she whispered. Her emotion suffocated her. "Why should Dr. Starva have imprisoned us here, unless—"
I looked at her stupefied.
"But Prince Ferdinand is not here at the chateau."
Her half-voiced wish uttered utterly. She clung to me in her despair.
"Save him! Save him!"
"But Ferdinand is not at the chateau," I repeated.
"He is at the music room—that death-mess!" She spoke hoarsely, but her meaning was too clear.
"You knew that he was coming here?"
"When you told me of the death-mess, when I saw the rage of Dr. Starva—I realized his danger. Yes, he was coming here—to-night. But I telegraphed him that at all costs he must not come. My Dr. Starva by some means intercepted that telegram."
"Who sent it?" I questioned anxiously.
"Jacques."
"Then your prince is doomed. It was Jacques who betrayed to me your presence here. I thought it was because of his him sufficiently well. Be sure of this, he is Starva's creature."
"Heaven, how you torture me! But it is true, why did he allow Sir Mortimer's life to come to me? He must have known that you sent for her."
"With ourselves she would be safely out of the way. Dr. Starva is more cautious. I have given him the credit of being so. We are caught like rats in a trap."
"But you must save him!"
"Impossible!"
"It is not impossible. There is a ladder—not on this side, but beneath the window of the oratory."
Her eyes glittered in the semi-darkness. She placed a finger on my lips.
"It is a ladder of a hundred feet or more! And it stands against the wall of the tower!" I exclaimed incredulously.
"Besides, if it were there, Captain Forbes might see it."
"This ladder, I call it for want of a better name, is made of great stones half as long as one's forearm that project from the smooth masonry at intervals of a foot. The chateau is old, very old. In feudal times, with a stout rope, one might escape from the tower. But it is impossible! We have no rope." She wrung her hands.
"But this ladder of stones reaches from roof to terrace, it would be simple enough without a rope. The stones are built out at regular intervals."
"How far are they apart?"
"At intervals they reach in a straight line for 100 feet. But the chateau is 150 feet high. These stones begin at the roof. No one could drop and live. Yes; we are caught like rats in a trap."
"Fifty feet! It would mean a broken limb, if not certain death. But if a man could knock off our clothing for half that height, I would do it. I went into the room through whose window the king's messenger had made his untimely entrance. I leaned over the edge of the window, shuddering. I was rescued by the death-mess myself. Twice I had proved myself a coward. This was to be my chance, unless Forbes should stubbornly refuse to believe in the existence of Ferdinand's ladder."
"The moon was rising; it shed an unearthly light on the pale face of Madame de Varrier as she looked up at the sky. The wind came in fitful gusts.
Suddenly there sounded a muffled report. At first I thought it thunder in the far-away mountains. But as I listened the muffled report grew louder and was repeated again and again, though more and more feebly. And it came from above.
"Do you hear it, that strange, muffled rap?" I asked of Madame de Varrier.
She took my place at the open window. For some moments she heard nothing. Then, strangely enough, though the wind was blowing almost a gale, it sounded distinctly.
"It is a sag on the long sagstaff of the central tower," she said presently. "But who can have given orders that the tower should be blown away?"
"That is a matter of indifference," I said joyfully. "An ensign so large as that requires a fairly substantial cord. Are you get that cord and plant it?"
"Where?"
"These windows!"
"No," she said anxiously. "It is Dr. Starva who has raised that flag. But why?"
"The question seemed to increase her anxiety. I was about to



"Take it!" she screamed. "Take it!"
Forbes side with a rage that was dreadful in its intensity.
Before I could guess at her purpose she had torn my coat open and seized the packet I had placed there. She pressed it into Forbes' hand. Her bitter rage and disappointment made her oblivious of the fact that she had given only one of the packets.
"Take it!" she screamed. "Take it! Ah, Mr. Coward, you are clever, but I shall have my revenge."
Forbes buttoned his coat over the papers he had received with an amused but grim satisfaction. Helena, standing apart from us, was convulsively clenching and unclenching her hands. Unseen by the other two, I cast her a meaningful glance that she should exert her strong will to restrain her pose. When they looked at her she stood passive and acquiescent. As for myself, I affected an air of chagrin and defeat.
"You will bear me witness, Miss Brett, that I did my best to place the packet in your hand. I can only hope that Captain Forbes will restore you those papers without reading them, or that they are of little importance."
"Little importance!" hissed Madame de Varrier. "Sir, guard those papers well; your ministers at Downing street will thank you if you lose them. And now, Mr. Coward, if you have conquered me, but not robbed me of my revenge, how much longer are we to stay here?"
Captain Forbes showed little surprise at the turn affairs had taken. He interpreted Madame de Varrier's move as that of one who had betrayed a confederate for motives of revenge. While he recognized the fact, he mistook the motive.

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Illinois State News

Recent Happenings of Interest in the Various Cities and Towns.

SUNDAY CONVERTS THIEF.
Youth Who Steals \$175 from Friend Repents and Confesses.
Galesburg—A young man named Simms, who was located in the city as an agent for a patent gas burner, was mysteriously robbed of a sum of \$175 which he had secreted in a trunk in his room. Certain circumstances pointed to the guilt of a friend. The suspicion of his accomplice in the deed was confirmed by his sudden disappearance from the city. The young man returned to the city, attended several of the "Bible" Sunday meetings at the tabernacle, and finally became converted.
He hunted up Simms, confessed to the theft of the money, and stated that he was willing to hand the consequences of his act. He then went to the sheriff accompanied by the man whose money he had taken, and gave the full details of his crime. So sincere in his grief and repentance was he that both the officer and Simms were deeply moved and an agreement was made whereby the lad was to receive \$100 from Simms and he had repaid the money which he had stolen.
MAYOR ARRESTED AS ELOPER.
Executive of Duquoin Taken into Custody in St. Louis.
Duquoin—Benjamin W. Pope, mayor of Duquoin, and Mrs. Ida Lee Manson, wife of a well-known business man at Mount Vernon, were arrested in the Burlington hotel, St. Louis.
They were taken to the central district police station, where, in the presence of her husband, Mrs. Manson broke down and covered her face with her hands. She is 24 years old. Pope is 54 years old.
Manson told the police that he had traced his wife to St. Louis, and at midnight he appeared at the police station and asked that she and her companion be arrested. He told the police where they were. Police located the couple without trouble and made the arrests quietly. Pope and Mrs. Manson went to the station without making any comment, but at the station, when Mrs. Manson saw her husband, she broke down and cried. They were released on bond.
CALLS FOOTBALL PRIZEFIGHTING.
Kankakee Attorney Seeks Injunction to Prevent Playing of Game.
Kankakee—Charging that football is prizefighting, Attorney S. R. Cord filed a bill for injunction restraining local high school students from playing the game.
Cord declares that L. N. Tracy, superintendent of the public schools, and L. W. Smith, high school principal, have aided and abetted prizefighting among the students; that the game of football is not only injurious, but demoralizes students; that members of the team use profanity on the field and the same in degrading, unmanly, unchristianlike and unbecomingly.
Claims \$100,000 Estate.
Pana—John Cord of Perago, N. D., is here on his way home from Raleigh, N. C., where he has just claimed 40 acres of land in the heart of the city, valued at \$100,000. He offers to take \$2,000,000 in settlement. Cord's claim is based on the land to Raleigh for 99 years, and the lease has just expired. Cord is wealthy and says he does not want to rob the city. He formerly resided here, and attorneys say he has a good claim.
Cuts \$50 Off with \$5.
Bloomington—The will of the late Federal Behr, director of \$9,000 in real estate and \$10,000 in personal property, was probated here. All debts are to be paid and five dollars paid to the son, Behr. The real and personal property is to be given to the widow, Cassilia Behr, for her use during her life, and at her death all is to be equally divided among the three daughters, namely, Mahon, Ida Rhodes and Louisa Behr.
Farmers Hold Meeting.
Litchfield—The Montgomery County Farmers' Institute meeting was held in this city. The attendance was large. The domestic science session held in connection with the meeting was also well attended.
Aged Woman Hangs Self.
Pontiac—Barbara Smith, 60 years old, ended her life by hanging herself with a strap from the post of her bed.
Thousands View Remains of Deere.
Moline—The remains of Hon. Charles H. Deere was held from the Congregational church, where the remains lay in state during the day, and were viewed by thousands. Rev. Paul Brown, pastor of the church, solemnized services over the body.
Missionaries Meet.
Jacksonville—The Woman's Foreign Missionary society of the Methodist church, Jacksonville, held its twenty-third annual meeting at Grace church in this city.
TALK OF JUVENILE LAW.
Officers Complain That Measure is Not Sufficiently Explicit.
Chicago—An attack was made on the juvenile law of Illinois at the annual meeting of the directors of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls in the Chicago Young's club.
"We have heard such a fuss made about the juvenile court and the juvenile law and then here to find there is no measure that should be added to it to make it complete," said Mrs. Henry Solomon, president of the board of directors.
"The trouble is that after a child has been brought into court there must be some place where he can be taken," said Mrs. Charles Herotia. "The law does not go far enough."
The treasurer's report showed there is a monthly deficit of almost \$700. The state allows ten dollars for the care and education of each girl, and it had been found \$15 is the smallest amount that can be expended.
The following officers were elected: President—Mrs. Henry Solomon. Vice presidents—Mrs. J. W. Buffington, Mrs. A. W. Wyrant. Corresponding secretary—Miss Grace Turner. Treasurer—Mrs. Lawrence W. Masters.
A plan for the sale of the property in Evanston was discussed. This property is estimated to be worth \$55,000. It is mortgaged for \$25,000. If purchasers can be found, the property will be sold and the school moved to that location at Park Ridge that has been secured by the board.
STILL LIVES ON PEANUTS.
Aurora Man Stays Well and Healthy on a Peanut Diet.
Aurora—Dr. T. J. Allen, the upholder of the peanut, has overcome one of his rival single-food exponents. James Purcell has been compelled to give up a green onion diet after six weeks. Edgar Brobst, the beaueater, and Henry Spoden, the sauerkraut addict, are still feeding on their favorite diets. But the roofer stigmatized beaueater Allen, in his fifteenth day. His wayward before 60 days have elapsed.
A sapping waitress and customers watched Brobst eat eight slices of peanut at the office sitting. He says Allen, in his fifteenth day. But he is feeling well.
Arrest Mine Official.
Litchfield—Thomas Holmes, superintendent of the Citizens' Coal company, and Oscar J. Menzel, shot after, were placed under arrest here on complaint of State Mine Inspector Thomas Hanna of Springfield, charged with violating the state mining laws relative to shot firing. The arrest grew out of the accident in the local mine Monday in which Jacob Lepuschitz was instantly killed by a blast of coal fired by himself. Holmes was released from custody on his own recognizance, while Menzel furnished \$200 bond. The superintendent and shot firer are held blameless in the accident because Lepuschitz was permitted to fire the shot.
Pioneer Settler Dies.
Litchfield—Mrs. Martha Rogers, widow of the late James Rogers, died at her residence, 821 North State street, after a short illness of heart trouble at the age of 70 years.
Martha J. DeShazo was born in Montgomery county, her ancestors being among the pioneer settlers of the county. At an early age, she was united in marriage to James Rogers. In the early fifties, they moved to this city.
State Architect's Salary Passed.
Springfield—The senate passed the state architect's salary increase bill with an emergency clause, and also bills giving boards of education in the same power to acquire school sites, and giving towns of 1,500 inhabitants authority to construct and maintain public libraries.
Amateur Dore Devil Injured.
Lewistown—While making the "slide for life" stunt on a home-made wire device at his home near here, Glenn Arnett, a 12-year-old amateur circus performer, fell and broke his collar bone and dislocated his right shoulder.
Triplets Born at Pana.
Pana—Annie Wilcox Robinson gave birth to triplets, all girls.
Gives Rockford College Telescope.
Rockford—Mrs. M. I. Hineman, of Danville, N. C., has given Rockford college a telescope and will erect an observatory on the campus as a memorial to her husband, Mr. Hineman is a graduate of the class of 1862.
Mount Sterling Man Killed.
Mount Sterling—James Braddock, 60 years old, died at Versailles from injuries received the day before in falling from the top of a wash tub, which is about 25 feet high. It is said he had been drinking.