

The Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls

Old Bloodhound Takes the Trail for the Last Time

By Barry Benefield

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR I. KELLER



IN ONE corner of the great oak desk there was a long row of pearl topped buttons, and the short, heavily built man sat down and pushed violently at the one marked "Office Manager." A moment later the outer door of his three-room office suite opened and let in a torrential clatter of typewriters that penetrated, somewhat dimmed, even to his inner room, and presently the second door opened to admit the deferential Kitchell.

"Mr. Kitchell, I told you before I left a week ago on the Western trip that my stenographer and private secretary had left me—again."

"Yes, Mr. Eads."

"To be married, of course. She is the latest of four whom I have by labor—great labor, Mr. Kitchell—trained to do my work in my way, only to be told just when they were becoming valuable that they wanted to marry! The fourth, the fourth successive one! You know this, Mr. Kitchell; you sent them in from the main office."

"Yes, sir; I remember."

"Now, Mr. Kitchell, in this last week have you found the kind of person I told you I wanted—one competent stenographer with sense enough to develop into a private secretary, who is not likely, so far as you can judge of course, to inveigle some man into dragging her off on a honeymoon? Still not a monstrosity; I hate ugliness. Nor a man; they talk inside business outside. Have you found her?"

"I think so, sir."

"Good! Send her in. I'll try her."

In order to test her rapidly, her accuracy, her readiness to meet an emergency quickly, and to accustom her in the beginning to his brusque, time-saving manner, Mr. Eads prepared to plunge into the dictation of several long and complicated letters.

WHEN she knocked he said, "Come in"; and began walking up and down, his head drooped forward on his folded arms, arranging the matter to be fired at her.

"Are you ready?" he asked. For a second he stopped and glanced at her. He was acutely conscious of a satisfying impression of trained efficiency, native intelligence, personal immaculateness and—something else. He had neither the time nor the inclination to analyze that; he began again his walking up and down.

The little woman moved swiftly to the stenographer's desk in the corner and cleared it for action. From time to time her gray eyes rested on the short, heavily built man striding up and down near her. She dared to let a smile flutter in her fair, almost imperceptibly pinched face, though instantly the smile was gone, and she pressed her lips together tightly. Suddenly sticking out her tongue at the back of the great man she tilted her chin even a shade higher and announced: "I am ready."

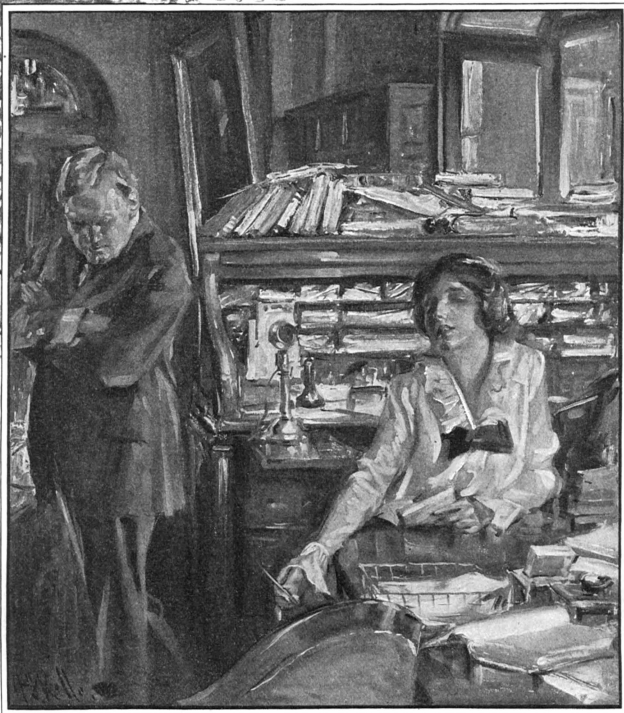
"Take these then."

Having dictated for almost an hour he consulted a memorandum pad on his desk, looked at his watch, snatched his hat from a peg in the closet set in the wall and started for the door. "I'm late for a meeting," he explained over his shoulder. "Your room is the one inside there. You'll find all you need; if not ask Mr. Kitchell. Leave the letters on my desk to be signed; I'll be back at one. Go out to luncheon when you're through or when you like; I have luncheon at two-fifteen always. I'd like you to get those letters off, please, as soon as they're signed."

At one o'clock he was back in his office. The door leading into the secretary's office was closed, and he judged from the feel of the atmosphere that she was gone. Sitting down leisurely he began reading over the pile of newly typed pages before him, signing the ends as he came to them.

"She's all right!" he said to himself contentedly. "At least with the pencil and the machine. And, thank Heaven! she's got sense; I can see that. The rest will follow. And I reckon she's safe from —"

He sat staring at a page in front of him. "What the dickens is this?" The page was not addressed and had no envelope on top of it. There were similar pages beneath.



"She Tilted Her Chin Even a Shade Higher and Announced: 'I am Ready'"

"In Minden," it said, "the houses are not jammed up against one another. There is usually an alley between the houses, so that wagons can drive in to unload wood for the fireplaces, fertilizer for the gardens and feed for the horses and cows; but John—he always refused to be called Johnnie—pretended that the alley between his house and hers was some vast body of water across which he sailed in a low, rakish craft to capture the Fair Isabel. He called her that. She suspected from the first that she owed the distinction of being chosen for the pirate's bride over the girl on the other side of his house to the facts of her name and hair; the other girl was named Mammie and her hair was the color of sand."

The man by the great oak desk leaned back in his chair. "Minden! That's curious." Reaching out his hand he pressed a pearl-topped button marked "Boy." He would send for her at once. But when the boy came in he only said: "Never mind." He would not send for her yet. Picking up the stenographer's manuscript, he leaned back in his chair and began reading again.

"All boys are divided into two classes—those who want to be locomotive engineers and those who want to be pirates. She had always liked the pirate kind of boys much better.

"Fair Isabel," he used to say to her sitting on her back steps with her dolls, one of whom always had the whooping cough, that being the only disease she knew the name of, "see you yonder ship in the offing?"

"She never could see the ship in the offing at first, but by standing and shading her eyes with her hands she could. 'Captain, I see.'"

"Make ready, then, girl; for we sail on the morrow at dawn."

"Saying which, he would stride away, his swords and cutlasses fighting one another between his short legs. Once, when he carried eight, they tripped him and he fell."

"Springing up he looked at the Fair Isabel to see if she were even smiling. Her eyes declared, no doubt, that they had seen absolutely nothing untoward happen. Striding up to her he announced: 'Come fortune fair or foul, you are the pirate Captain's bride.' Then he went off on a cruise around the house for a couple of years."

"Being patriotic they were studying United States history in which the most fascinating character thus far mentioned was Captain Kidd, and Louisiana history which described the gorgeous Lafitte of New Orleans. That curious

streak of fairness marked in all Simon-pure pirates was in John, too, so that he alternated between the parts, one week roving the broad Atlantic (his back yard) as Kidd, the next spreading terror among the shipping (the chickens) of the circling Gulf (her back yard) as Lafitte. And though the Fair Isabel was on board wherever the black flag flew, yet her life on the bounding billows was not an unhappy one. All she asked was that she might have with her the brats, and leisure to treat the particular one that happened at any time to be afflicted with whooping cough.

"Once on the Atlantic, in the midst of a shrieking storm, one of the brats whooped so violently that her golden hair fell off into the sea. The vessel heaved to, to rescue the hair, with the result that a British man-o-war came very near capturing Kidd and all his crew, not to speak of three express-wagon loads of gold. Rough pirate justice demanded that a brat with hair as indiscreet as that should walk the plank out of the stable window, at sunset. Dawn and sunset are the two critical hours in a pirate's days."

THE Fair Isabel died young. It was in the spring, for in her last moments, with that keenness of the senses that had enabled her always to see the pirate ship in the offing, she saw from the deck of Lafitte's long schooner the pale pink myrtle blooms, and caught the sweet odor of the white Cape jasmines, and heard old Mis' Leslie's bees mobbing the flowering locust trees in her back yard. There was ever a streak of tenderness in Lafitte. And though the lookout reported six or seven helpless and undoubtedly rich merchantmen near by, yet the Captain said, holding his hands over his eyes, "We have other business in hand today. And there'll be no gun loosed on this ship for a week."

"And so, not far from Mobile Bay on the edge of the warm Gulf Stream, at sunset they buried the Fair Isabel. Religion, alas! did not largely occupy Lafitte's every-day thoughts, but it touched him atwart his pallid face, the sinking sun atwart his bride slipped beneath the changeless sea: 'I know not how, Fair Isabel, but some time, some where, we shall meet again.' And, turning, he strode toward his cabin. Passing a worshipping cabin boy he stopped to lay a gentle hand on his shoulder. 'My lad,' he said, looking out across the gold-flecked waves, 'some day you also will grow up and be a man. It is dangerous to love a woman too much. For if you lose her, life loses all its flavor.' Then he disappeared into his cabin, not to be seen for a week."

"At least that was his firm intention, but his delicate retirement was rudely broken into by circumstances over which he had no control—for one thing, school."

HOLDING the pages yet unread in his hand the man by the great oak desk rose and walked to the open window. Forty stories below Trinity's ancient churchyard lay, a tiny speck of quiet, clean green in the chaos of Lower Manhattan's crowding buildings. Down from Central Park, riding the soft spring breeze, came sweet faint ghosts of flowering myrtles and white Cape jasmines. The morning sun, out in the bay, spread the smooth water with shining silver. Coming home, going home, huge-funnelled ships steamed up and down the city's twin rivers. Opposite the Battery several sailing vessels lay at anchor. One of them was a three-masted schooner, and the man by the window surely saw a black flag flying at half-mast, as when the Fair Isabel—was it yesterday?—sank slowly into the sea. And turning, his head drooped forward on his folded arms, the sun atwart his pallid face, he strode to his desk, sat down and began reading again the stenographer's manuscript:

"Whether influenced by the passing of the Fair Isabel, or whether his thoughts were turned into more



"And So, on the Edge of the Warm Gulf Stream, at Sunset They Buried the Fair Isabel"

virtuous channels by nickel and dime novels that now began circulating, unseemly of parents, about the neighborhood, Captain Kidd-Lafitte became something else. Having cut throats and scuttled ships for many long years, the pirate at the age of thirteen turned over a new leaf. Not infrequently breakers of the law do latterly become its stoutest defenders, and the reformed rover of the seas began that unselfish service of the cause of law and order as Old King Brady, Old Cap Collier, Old Sleuth, Old Silent and Old Bloodhound. It was his modest belief that he did his best work as Old Bloodhound.

"The Fair Isabel was no more, but the Queen of the Wharf Rat Gang, the Queen of the Diamond Thieves, the Queen of the Opium Smokers, the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls, she was; and she lived a shamelessly glorious life. The ghouls exhumed several brats whose bodies she had had in sneaking curiosity for some time to see anyway. Her daylight nights among the ghouls were perhaps the most placidly pleasant she has ever spent. Still it seemed that she was doomed to be captured always.

"'It's a hard case,' Old Bloodhound used to say quite frankly; 'but, woman, I warn you, I never drop a trail.'
'Nor did he then.

"THERE was a curious similarity about the conclusions of his cases. The end of the ghoulish case was like all the rest. Standing before the captured criminal queen, a cool, quiet smile on his calm face, he slid the bullseye lantern back under his coat and touched her on the shoulder.
'I believe,' he said, with no trace of the excitement of victory in his low voice, 'I stand in the presence of the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls.'
'And so this is Old Bloodhound?' In her tone was not so much interrogation as acknowledgment of defeat.
'Then the game's up.'

"'Yes, the game's up. I never put the nippers on a woman's wrists unless I have to. My mother was a woman. Will you go with me, or must I —'
'It is useless to resist,' she said; and, rising, stood ready to go with him.

"But no matter how low in calloused criminality she had sunk, and though all the men of all her gangs were hanged or sent to the penitentiary for ninety-nine years, yet she was repeatedly saved in court by the laconic but marvelously effective eloquence of the great detective, whom she married *seriatim*.

"In these modern times no doubt every veteran ferret of thirteen has an electric flashlight, but Old Sleuth and his contemporaries did peerless, if not original, service in the destruction of society's parasites though they used only the old-fashioned, oil-burning, japanned-tin bullseye lantern, which, it must be admitted however, always undiplomatically proclaimed its approach by the odor of oil and burnt paint sent in advance, far in advance and all around. John's father once caught Old Bloodhound creeping around under the house, flashing the bullseye into the unblinking eyes of stubbornly maternal hens sitting in dark chimney corners, and dragged him out. In the struggle Old Bloodhound's disguise came off—any detective's would have come off—so he was instantly recognized. On the pretense that the bullseye was dangerous to the house he was condemned to pick parasitic potato bugs off the plants in the garden every day for a week after school.

"A large majority of potato bugs are of a low, furtive nature, which prevents them from taking a frank, open, manly stand on the top sides of the leaves whence they can be easily picked off and killed. Old Bloodhound, therefore, derived great benefit from the bullseye, which he snatched from beneath his coat and flashed upon every villainous plant he came across almost every other plant. The potato patches were in a dreadful condition that year.

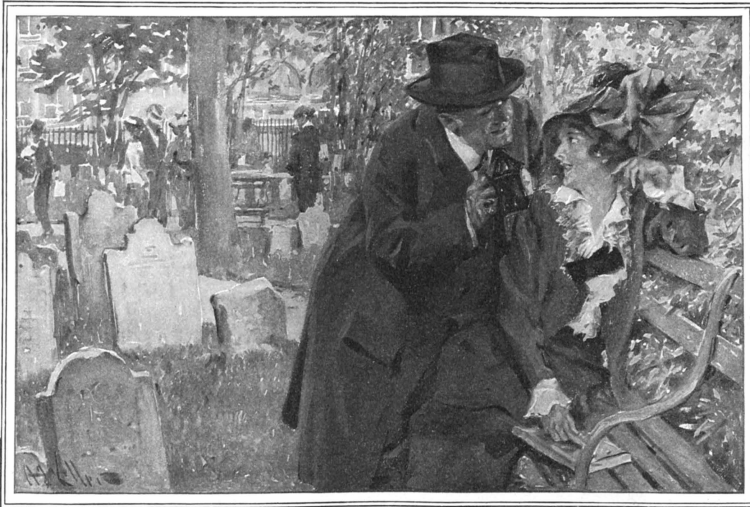
"The Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls, being in a state of temporary reformation and matrimony, helped him. And though every time she touched a slick, wriggly, striped bug she wanted to throw it down and run, and though she felt as if millions of the things were crawling all over her, yet she did not run, because Old Bloodhound had to pick two long rows before supper on penalty of being switched.

"Sometimes, across the alley, she would hear him getting switched. This was always a hard for her as if the strokes were on her own bare legs; and perhaps she cried more than Old Bloodhound did himself. But he did not know that; she was ashamed to betray her weakness to him who usually, at the beginning of a whipping, shut his lips tight and got mad, an undiplomatic action that only brought on more licks and hurt her more."

RISING and tiptoeing, for some vague reason, the man by the great oak desk moved to the door of the inner room set aside for his secretary. It was only half-past one o'clock, but she might have come in. He knocked, and, receiving no answer, tiptoed back to his chair and began reading again:
"Then there came a lonesome time, her first lonesome time, for the old queen. The ex-pirate and ex-detective turned into a girl-hating fisherman-hunter. Five miles down the bayou he and a bigger savage built a small log cabin on the bank; and when school did not claim them, and often when it did, they were 'bachin' it,' contentedly alone with the woods and other rough wild things to which they were

akin. But that phase passed within a year, and John became not again, indeed, the fiercely gallant Lafitte, nor the charmingly mysterious and perfectly poised Old Bloodhound, but a strange, bashful, grubby, shifty-eyed creature with a cracked voice and a face usually gashed about the lips and chin. His mother had been dead a long time, and the indiscreet Mrs. Peck, his father's housekeeper, told the queen that Old Bloodhound was misusing his first razor.

"About this time the candy-heart mania seized Minden's younger set. It usually came in the spring, just after kites and just before marbles. The old queen's father being a kiln boss at a sawmill a mile down the bayou, it fell to her to go after the mail every afternoon. On the way to the post office she had to cross a bridge over a deep gully. For a week



"I Believe I Stand in the Presence of the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls"

she noticed him who had been the fearless Kidd and the intrepid Old Bloodhound hiding under the bridge. Finally, late one afternoon, he came sneaking out across her path. With eyes averted he handed her a necklace of pink candy hearts, all bored with a jackknife and strung on a narrow pink ribbon. Then he hurried away, lest she notice in his presence the printing on the hearts saying, among many even more outrageous things: 'To my darling.'

"The old queen, however, had known all along what was coming from under the bridge, for five other ex-detectives had already awarded her their necklaces of pink hearts. All the old pirates, however, were horribly unattractive now. Still honor if not mercy, demanded that she make and delicately indicate a comparative choice, lest there be more furtive fighting such as had already sent Old Bloodhound home with a dark blue eye and a bleeding nose. Presently the old queen and her nearest neighbor were at a party where he or she who was 'it' knelt in a ring of circling, chanting children before their successive choices, and singing, 'I measure my love to show you,' so done by holding the hands more or less widely apart. Old Bloodhound got her widest measure.

"All the ex-pirates and even the future engineers, without a knowing what was the matter with them, were fairly sick for a new kind of playing that would give to their eruptive, remolding being something of grace and ease and polish. Presently a Frenchman named Chouiseul, coming from New Orleans, brought in something of grace and ease and polish. He opened a dancing school in the Light Guards' deserted armory, with a negro to turn the crank of a mechanical piano on wheels, that furnished perfect dance time, if little music. Behold Old Bloodhound transformed again—this time into a social butterfly! Once indeed on a rainy Friday night he took the old queen to a dance in the cab; Minden had but one. 'Yes,' the old queen said to the other girls at the dance, 'oh, yes, we came in a cab. It's so rainy out.'

"After two years Old Bloodhound deserted society for scholarship. Ambition grew, and his hair. 'Women' were put out of his thoughts. He lived to make 'A's' in school. Sometimes on the way home he would walk with the old queen, if she hurried to catch up with him. He talked with monstrosity sobriety and ignorance about Platonic love; he was also very sad; he said he had several secret sorrows. One was that he had 'frittured his life away.'
"Not infrequently a neighbor or a negro used to push Old Bloodhound's father home in a wheelbarrow when the cab was otherwise engaged. Early one night, when he had been pushed home by Burnt-Faced Joe, Mrs. Peck ran out to the alley fence and called: 'Mr. Lubling! Mr. Lubling! Come over, please. I think this is the last one for him.' On a rainy day the next week, when everybody carried umbrellas, John's father rode up the hill in the black hearse with the white horses, and the night of that day the scholar came over and told the old queen that he must go to college and be somebody. 'Yes, you must go.' Her lips said it.

"Old Bloodhound's father left very little, and the ex-pirate started out over the parish selling thin books for fat prices. They swept the parish, sending Old Bloodhound on to college in the autumn. After that Mrs. Peck went away to live

with relatives. The owner of the house rented it to another family. When they moved in the old queen, though she was sixteen, stole over into the back yard one night and dug up from the ground under the mulberry by the woodpile the comparatively immortal china hands and heads and feet of Lafitte's five lonely brats.

"Four years at college and not a week in Minden! In the vacation periods the ex-pirate had to earn money in other parts of the State with which to continue his course. But there were letters, letters partly for the reason no doubt that Old Bloodhound wanted the other students at his boarding-house to see that he, too, got letters from a girl, for he cautioned the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls please to make her handwriting, at least on the envelopes, less like a man's. In

his second year he sent a little fraternal pin.

"When a fellow gives this to a girl, he writes, 'and she accepts it, it means—you know what, Isabel. Don't ever whisper it to a soul that I told you, but the three Greek letters on the pin are the initials of words meaning Honor and Courage and Fidelity.' The old queen never whispered it outside.

"IN HER life there are four periods so splendid that they seem to belong to some golden, legendary age far away in space, but they lie back in the magic mist of time—once when she roved the seas as a pirate's bride, again when she was Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls, then when she and Old Bloodhound were villains, but they lie together, and—another.
"Now came the other; she was getting ready. Lest, on the wings of books, he soar so far away from her

that some time in the future she might shame him with her unlettered ignorance, she gathered books to her heart, too; not schoolbooks, for school days for the kiln man's daughter were over, but whatever the village library and the neighbors could lend her—old books most of them; many very dry, some very wise, a few that seemed to have been written by men who had known her and Old Bloodhound intimately; all of them giving something that might help.

"In the bottom of her bigger trunk there began accumulating pieces of fine linen, hemmed, embroidered, laundered, not for herself alone. Old Bloodhound took care of the beginning. In the other trunk, the low fat one, were collected an old, blistered bullseye lantern, some china heads and hands and feet tied in bunches and named, many dance programs with tiny, dangling pencils, and one necklace of pink candy hearts; in another day Old Bloodhound might like to remember the days when he was young.

"The fourth great period, the greatest! The long summer days sang and the silver nights whispered; telling no one the old queen was getting ready.
"After college Old Bloodhound traveled northward. Within two years there were five letters from Nashville, three from St. Louis, one from Chicago, then—no more. One by one six of the pirate brats were put in boxes and sent through the mail to the Chicago address. One of those terrible secret letters in Old Bloodhound's pin stood for Courage, another for Fidelity. The old queen continued to get ready."

"THE man by the great oak desk laid down the few typewritten pages yet unread and let his head sink into his hands. Several times his hand reached out haltingly to find the peartopped button marked 'Boy,' but it always drew back before contact. After a while, with an effort, he sat up and began once more reading the stenographer's manuscript:

"Some day, the old queen planned, she would go searching for the wandering Lafitte; but soon her mother went up the hill in the black hearse, which had gray horses now, and her father was getting weak and helpless with age. For his sake, and looking into the future, she studied stenography at home, then went into the Minden National Bank. She was cashier on all parties; she belonged to the Baptist Ladies' Aid Society; she sang hymns at funerals. It happens earlier in small towns than in cities—she was passing into old maidenhood. But one day at the beginning of a new year she sat on a train looking out on Minden as it also slipped away into time and space. Her eyes rested last on that part of town, near the upstanding Baptist steeple with the rusty brown tin covering, where Old Bloodhound had buried down the nefarious potato bugs, and then on the white-stoned cemetery where lay her parents and his. Minden now was only the dead; life was elsewhere—maybe.

"Chicago! She could not find him there. At the street number given in the final letter a new loft building was going up. But there his boarding-house had been; there, so long ago, the postman had handed in, one by one, packed in shoe boxes, the pirate's brats, carrying messages from their ancient mother that could not be delivered.

"Using her stenography for food and clothes the old queen took her stand and waited and watched. In other days her eyes could see fairly well, as when shading them with her hands she always saw the ship lying in the offing. 'It's a hard case,' Old Bloodhound used to say, 'but, woman, I'll get you in the end. I never drop a trail.' And she had his old bullseye lantern to help her.

"The 'Minden Mercury' followed her every week. Once it had a piece of news in it; that was when she had been in Chicago three years. 'The Mercury' had copied it from a daily of the State's metropolis, which in turn had taken it, as proved by internal evidence, from a New York paper. It was about 'The Rise of a Mindenite.' Old Bloodhound was the Mindenite. It did not matter what he was. Where was he? The story told. The next day she was on the train, going Eastward this time. How to meet him? Could the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls meet Old Bloodhound in a commonplace way? Could she write a note beginning, 'Dear John, perhaps you will remember —' No, not that way.

THE QUEEN OF THE GRAVEYARD GHOULS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

"The lobby of his office building has a great semicircle of elevator doors. Opposite them are stands for telephones, shoe-blacks, cigars, candy, flowers; it is almost a public place. There she could wait—to be detected. In other days Old Bloodhound could detect her though she was heavily disguised in her father's overcoat. Now she wore no disguise of which she was aware. He passed in and out of the lobby every day for a week; he never saw her.

"But was she fair? She and he had always played fair. Was it fair to expect him to detect her in such a constant crowd? One day he stepped in an elevator that had no other passengers. She hurriedly followed him in. For a second his steady brown eyes rested on her, then left her. The elevator was getting near the top of the building. He must leave it soon. Yet she did not, could not, speak. Instinct, pride, was against it; though they stood face to face Old Bloodhound had not detected the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls. He stepped off at the fortieth floor; she rode down and got to her boarding-house.

"What next—if anything? Up there on the fortieth floor there must be stenographers, many of them. She was a stenographer. After six months she was there. Maybe some day, in passing, Old Bloodhound would pierce her disguise, her inevitable disguise of thirty-four years. Often he did pass through the main office. Often she could almost reach out her hand and touch him, as she always longed to do; and always when he was near, even though her head was bent over a machine, she was whispering: 'Old Bloodhound is on the trail.' But he wasn't; he could not ever again detect the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls.

"One of the stenographers from the main office was promoted to be his secretary. The old queen cultivated the girl's friendship that she might get in his room all alone just once. When she did she left in his coat closet the old bulseye. It cost to do that. Of all the pride she had left, and that was not much perhaps, it cost half. But it had taken eighteen months to bring her to that. Maybe he never saw it.

CONCLUDED ON PAGE 77



THE QUEEN OF THE GRAVEYARD GHOULS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 76)

"Within a year another girl from the main office was sent in to be his secretary, and not long afterward a third. Then one day Mr. Kitchell sent the old queen herself into the President's office. Without asking her name he shot four letters at her and went out. They were easy; she did them in fifty minutes. Tiptoeing to the coat closet she looked in. The old bullseye still stood in a corner. Perhaps he had seen it and it had meant nothing to him. But maybe he hadn't, maybe he hadn't.

"He would be gone over two hours. She walked to the window and looked out. Down in the bay, under the guns of Castle William, lay a three-masted schooner. She thought she saw a black flag fluttering from a masthead. In the April wind were white locust blooms and the whispers of babies, babies drifting far, farther away. When the wind rose she heard a pirate's brat with the whooping cough.

"The old queen went back to the typewriter. When she had hidden the venerable, blistered bullseye in Old Bloodhound's closet she had killed half of all the pride she had left. It had required a year and a half to bring her to that. What she now wrote on the typewriter killed the other half. It had required two years to bring her to that—nearly four years in all.

"Once, long, long ago, at sunset, Fair Isabel, the pirate's bride, was buried on the edge of the warm Gulf Stream. She died of imagination. The Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls never died. She was always rescued. A queen without pride is no longer a queen. The old Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls is dying now. She goes to join the gang. The end, at least, must be fitting. Old queen, dear old queen, dearer than all the rest, good-by!"

THE man by the great oak desk put down the last sheet, paused an instant, then sprang to the closet. Swinging open the door he snatched his hat off the peg, and then suddenly leaned down and felt around in the dark corners. He pulled out the old bullseye.

"She's only playing," he cried to himself, "she's only playing. I know it, now."

Rushing back to the desk he pushed hard on the pearl-topped button marked "Boy."

"Son, do you know where my stenographer has her luncheon?" he asked when the buttoned boy came in. "The new one, the one that came in this morning? Do you know her?"

"Her? Sure, sir, everybody here knows her." The boy's voice was enthusiastic. "She eats in the restaurant next door. I'll go after her."

"No, I'll go."

"But she may not be there now, sir," the boy argued. "Sometimes she goes across the street and sits in Trinity churchyard, specially when it's fine weather like this. A lot of them do. I'll go over there."

"Never mind. Get back to your work."

As the boy passed out, "Everybody here knows her!" muttered the man. He slid the bullseye under his coat, pulled his hat over his eyes and stole toward the door. Old Bloodhound was on the trail for the last time!

Behind Trinity's iron fence the grass of a new season sprang green and strong from a soil seeded by Nature two hundred years before. The tiny wilderness of brown tombstones, dissolving slowly back into the beginnings, leaned over the graves of men and women who lived in a time that knew the terrific Kidd and the gallant LaFitte. Peering through the tall palings Old Bloodhound saw, sitting on a bench under a blossoming bush, the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls—alone.

FOR once, the great detective concluded, she was off her guard, because her usually taut little body lay limply back against the bench and her eyes were closed. Slipping through a side gate Old Bloodhound maneuvered to a position behind the bench, and, pulling his bullseye from under his coat, stole around with absolute noiselessness and stood beside her. After a while he reached out his hand and touched her shoulder.

The eyes of the old queen fluttered, opened, closed, then looked up into his.

"I believe I stand in the presence of the Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls," he said, sliding the bullseye back under his coat and smiling desperately.

"And so this is Old Bloodhound?" she asked, turning her head wearily down on her arm.

"Then the game's up."

"Yes, the game's up. I never put the nippers on a woman's wrists unless I have to. My mother was a woman. Will you go with me, or must I —"

"It is useless to resist," she said; and, rising, stood ready to go.

As they passed the corner of the ancient church she left his side and stood, leaning against a stone pillar, beating her hands together and laughing a low, mocking laugh. "Foiled!" she hissed. "Old Bloodhound is foiled at last."

"Why—er? What do you —? No, Old Bloodhound never drops a trail."

"The Queen of the Graveyard Ghouls has slipped *your* clutches. She lies back there with the gang. She will never come back, Old Bloodhound. Won't you let her be, won't you, please, let her be, Old Bloodhound, for ever and ever and ever?" She was pleading now.

He thought a minute. Then a frown settled on his brow, and he folded his arms, letting his head droop forward on them. "Girl, see you yonder ship in the offing?"

She shaded her eyes with her hands and looked a long time.

"Oh, Isabel, please!"

"Captain, I see."

"Make ready, then, girl; for we sail on the morrow—at noon."

And they did.