

## The Vanishing Man

Charles Duer Carroll paused at the curb in front of a downtown office building and stared across the busy street. There was a feverish restlessness in his merciless gray eyes, an unpleasant frown on his brow. Carroll was a remarkable-looking man. He was young—only thirty—and physically every line of his body expressed power; he had been a famous athlete in college. He had an indomitable, uncompromising jaw, a square aggressive chin, thin lips—avaricious, perhaps—and a slightly hooked nose. In general his appearance was that of a keenly alert man who is never surprised, who chooses his way and pursues it without haste, without mercy—and without mistakes.

Despite his youth—perhaps, because of it—Carroll was the president and active head of the great brokerage concern, the Carroll, Swayne, McPartland Company, with general offices on the fourth floor of the huge ornate building behind him. He held that responsible position by right of being the grandson of its founder, old Nick Carroll. At the time of his retirement from active business the previous year, the old man had banged his desk with a lusty fist and so declared it—Charlie Carroll was to be his successor. There had been objections from the Board of Directors, violent protests even, but the old man owned five thousand and one of the ten thousand shares of the company. Charles was made president.

Financially, the young man was interested in the company only to the extent of owning twenty-five shares, this being a gift from old Nick and a necessary qualification for any office holder. Beyond this rather meager interest—meager in comparison with the holdings of other officers and stockholders in the company—young Carroll had only his salary of ten thousand dollars a year, nothing else; he had been exalted to this from a salary of eighteen hundred a year and a clerk's desk.

Thus it came about that a pauper, from the viewpoint of financial circles, directed the affairs of a company whose business ran into tens of millions annually. When young Carroll felt that he needed advice, he did not hesitate to go straight to the fountainhead, old Nick himself. And when he asked for advice he took it. At other

times he sailed his own course, and sailed it as he pleased, leaving accrued profits to inform the stockholders of his actions. At such times old Nick would rub his skinny hands together and smile.

For months after young Carroll assumed the reins of government there had been fear in the conservative hearts of officers and stockholders of a misstep and a consequent wreck of company affairs; all except old Nick. This apprehension was finally dissipated, but it left a residue of rankling envy. Not one in authority would have said it was not for the best interests of the firm that old Nick had infused the staid old company with this young blood. But half a dozen could have enumerated a thousand reasons why a youth of thirty should not hold the position of president.

Be that as it may, Charles Duer Carroll, the pauper, was president of the company, and he had brought into it new vigor and vitality, and a surly, curt, merciless method that had enabled him to achieve astonishing things. And this was the young man who stood at the curb glaring across the busy street. At last he dropped his half-smoked cigar on the pavement and ground it to shreds with a vigorous heel; then he turned and stared up at the building. He could see a window of his office in the corner straight above him, and in that office work called. But he wasn't thinking of work, he was thinking of—

He snapped his fingers impatiently and entered the building. An elevator whirled him up to the fourth floor. A moment later he entered the large outer office of the company. The frown was still on his brow, the steeliness still in his gray eyes. Several clerks nodded respectfully as he entered, but there was no greeting in return, not even his usual curt time of day. He strode straight across the room to his private office and banged the door behind him.

Over in a corner of the outer office Gordon Swayne, secretary and treasurer, was dictating letters. He glanced around at the sudden noise which had disturbed him.

"Who did that?" he demanded of his stenographer.

"It was Mr. Carroll, sir."

"Oh!" And Mr. Swayne resumed his dictation.

For more than an hour he continued dictating; then a letter which required the attention of President Carroll came to hand and he rose and went into the private office. He came out after a moment and spoke to his stenographer.

"Didn't Mr. Carroll go into his office this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

Swayne glanced around the office inquiringly.

"Did you see him come out?"

"No, sir."

Swayne laid the letter aside for the moment and continued with the other correspondence. From time to time he glanced impatiently at the clock, then to the door from the hallway. At ten minutes past eleven he had finished dictating and, worried, he went over and spoke to a bookkeeper near the door.

"Did you see Mr. Carroll go out?" he asked. "And do you know where he went?"

"He hasn't gone out, sir," replied the bookkeeper. "I saw him go into his office a couple of hours ago."

Swayne turned and started to the private office with the evident intention of leaving the letter on the president's desk. The door of the room was still closed, and he was reaching out his hand to open it when it was opened from within and Carroll started out.

"Well, what is it?" Carroll demanded curtly.

"I—er—here's something I wanted to ask you about," Swayne explained.

Carroll glanced at the letter.

"You should have called this to my attention two hours ago."

Swayne's face flushed.

"I tried to call it to your attention two hours ago," he explained, "but you were not in your private office."

"I've been in my office all morning." Carroll glared at Swayne. "Wire immediately that we'll accept."

The two men stood looking straight into each other's eyes for an instant. Swayne's face showed not only anger but bewilderment; whatever Carroll felt was not evident. There was more color in his face than usual, but he was somewhat red of face when he came out of the private office.

That afternoon Carroll had a neat placard placed on the door of his private office. It read:

DO NOT ENTER THIS ROOM WITHOUT KNOCKING. IF MR. CARROLL DOES NOT ANSWER IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD THAT HE IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Swayne read it and wondered, feeling somehow that it was a direct rebuke to him; the clerks read it and wondered and commented on it varyingly; the office boys read it and added their opinions. On the following day the incident was repeated with slight variations.

Swayne saw Carroll arrive, pass through the outer office, and go into the private office, closing the door behind him. Half an hour later Swayne spoke to the bookkeeper, Black, to whom he had spoken the day before.

"Please give this to Mr. Carroll."

The bookkeeper took the paper, crossed the office, and rapped on Carroll's door. He returned to Swayne.

"Mr. Carroll doesn't answer, sir."

"You know he's in there, don't you?" asked Swayne blandly.

"I saw him go in a while ago, sir, but I didn't open the door because of the sign on it."

"Oh, that's of no consequence," exclaimed Swayne impatiently. "This is a matter of importance. Take it in to him whether he answers or not."

Again the bookkeeper knocked on the door and again he returned.

"Mr. Carroll wasn't in there, sir," he explained, "and I had to leave the paper on his desk."

"I thought you said you saw him go in."

"I did, sir."

"Then if he hasn't come out, he must still be in there," insisted Swayne. "Are you sure he isn't in there?"

"Yes, sir, positive," replied the bewildered bookkeeper.

"We'll go in there together and see if he isn't to be found."

"But, sir, I—"

"Come along," directed Swayne.

The bookkeeper followed Swayne, wondering what it was all about. Swayne rapped on the door. There was no answer and he pushed open the door. Carroll was sitting at his desk going over the morning mail. Apparently he was not aware that the door had been opened, and Swayne started to close it as he and the bookkeeper backed out.

"You are mistaken, Black, as you see," Swayne remarked casually.

"Come in, Mr. Swayne, and you too, Black," called Carroll.

Swayne warned the bookkeeper to silence with one quick, comprehensive look, then reopened the door; they entered the private office, Swayne closing the door behind them. He faced his superior calmly; the bookkeeper twiddled his fingers nervously.

"Since when is it customary for employees to disobey my orders?" demanded Carroll coldly.

"Mr. Black told me you were not here and I came to see for myself," Swayne replied with a singular emphasis on each word.

"You see he was mistaken," said Carroll with equal emphasis. "Mr. Black, we shall not require your services any longer. Mr. Swayne will give you a check for what is due you. And you, Mr. Swayne, understand that if my orders are not obeyed to the letter in this office, I shall be compelled to make other changes. From this time forward the door will be locked when I am in my office. That is all."

"But I was obeying orders when—" Black began.

"I put my order on the door for you to obey," interrupted Carroll. "Write him a check, Mr. Swayne."

The two men went out. Carroll had been seated at his desk, but the door had no sooner closed than they heard the lock snap inside.

"What does it mean, Black?" Swayne asked the bookkeeper.

"I don't know, sir. Mr. Carroll certainly was not in that room when I first went in there. And as for discharging me—"

"You are not discharged," Swayne said impatiently. "You are just going to take a vacation for a couple of weeks at full salary. Meanwhile, have luncheon with me today."

Professor Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen—The Thinking Machine—straightened up in his chair suddenly and turned his squinting, belligerent eyes full on his two visitors.

"Never mind your personal opinions or prejudices, Mr. Swayne," he said sharply. "If you want me to help you in this matter, I must insist that you tell me the facts, and only the facts. And I don't want them colored by any ill feeling you may have for Mr. Carroll. I can readily understand the cause of your ill feeling. You are his senior in the office and he was promoted over your head to be the company's president. Now tell me the facts—only the facts, please."

Swayne's face flushed and it was with an effort that he controlled himself. Once he looked toward Black, who had been a silent witness to this remarkable interview.

"Well, after those first two incidents," Swayne went on at last, "the door of Mr. Carroll's private office was always locked on the inside the moment he was left alone. I am not a fool, Professor Van Dusen. It is reasonable to suppose that if Mr. Carroll disappeared from that room twice when the door was left unlocked, he is gone from it practically all the time the door is locked, and I think—"

"Your opinion again," interrupted The Thinking Machine.

"If he isn't gone from the room, why does he keep the door locked?"

"Perhaps," and the crabbed little scientist regarded the financier

coldly, "perhaps it's really because he is busy and doesn't want to be interrupted. I'm that way myself sometimes."

"But it is necessary for us to interrupt him. He gets very angry with us when we don't. None of us knows what to do, and it's getting more and more difficult to carry on. And where does he go? And why does he go? But the big question is *how* does he go?"

"If I am to diagnose this case," remarked the little scientist almost pleasantly, "I should say it's a severe case of idle curiosity complicated with prejudice and suspicion." Suddenly his tone, his whole manner changed. "Has the conduct of the company's business been all it should be since Mr. Carroll has been in charge?"

"Well, yes," admitted Swayne.

"He has made money for the company?"

"Yes."

"Nothing has been stolen?" the scientist went on.

Swayne shook his head.

"Everything with the company is all right," he said.

The Thinking Machine rose impatiently.

"If anything had been wrong you would have gone to the police. Since nothing is wrong you come to me. I don't mind giving assistance when it is for constructive purposes, but my time is valuable to the world of science, Mr. Swayne, and I cannot be disturbed by such a trivial affair as this. If anything goes wrong, if anything extraordinary happens, you may call again. Good day."

Swayne's face was crimson with anger at his abrupt dismissal. But at the door he turned back.

"Could you possibly tell us how Mr. Carroll disappeared from his office on the two occasions when we know he did disappear?"

"You saw him go in one door, he went out another, I suppose," the scientist replied.

"There is only one other door in Carroll's office," retorted Swayne with something like triumph in his voice, "and that door has been nailed up for years! Besides, it is blocked in his office by his desk and blocked in the stockholders' meeting room, to which it leads, by a long and very heavy couch. He could not possibly go through that door! The offices are fifty feet from the ground, so he couldn't jump from a window. And, I may add, there is no fire escape at his window. Now, how *does* he get out?"

Swayne had raised his voice stridently. The Thinking Machine regarded him a moment, then opened the door to the street.

"I don't know if you know it," he said at last calmly, "but you are

almost convincing me that something is wrong at your office—and that *you* are responsible for it. Good day.”

The steel-gray eyes of Charles Duer Carroll were blazing as he flung open the outside door from the hallway and entered the general offices of the Carroll, Swayne, McPartland Company. He strode to his private office without a look or word for his subordinates, then wheeled at the door and called:

“Mr. Swayne!”

The secretary and treasurer started a little at the imperative tone, and Carroll motioned for him to come into the private office. The door closed and the clerks outside heard the lock click. Inside, Swayne stood waiting the president’s pleasure. He sensed a vague physical danger.

“Sit down!” commanded Carroll. The secretary sat down. “You are the secretary and treasurer of this company, are you not?” Carroll asked brutally.

“Certainly. Why?”

“Then you know, or are supposed to know, exactly what securities this company holds in trust for its customers to protect margins?”

“Certainly I know,” Swayne answered after a moment.

“You know that in the three million dollars’ worth of securities in our vaults, and in the safety-deposit vaults all over the city, there is one lot of four hundred thousand dollars’ worth of United States bonds that include the numbers 0043917 to 0044120?”

Swayne paused to consider the matter carefully. He wondered if this was a trap of some sort, but he couldn’t decide.

“Do you or do you not know that this consignment of bonds includes those numbers?” Carroll urged hotly.

“Yes,” was the reply. “I know that those numbers are included in the Mason-Sackett Trust lot. Also, I know that I myself locked them in our vaults here.”

Carroll turned savagely in his chair.

“If you know that, then what does this mean?” and he flung down a sheet of paper on the desk.

Swayne, with a vague sense of terror he could not fathom at the moment, picked up the paper and glanced over it. It was an affidavit signed by E. C. Manners and Company, brokers, and dated the day before. It was the usual form, and attested with innumerable reiterations that United States government bonds, numbers 0043917

to 0043940 inclusive, were in the possession of E. C. Manners and Company, having been bought in the open market three days before.

Swayne stared unbelievably at the affidavit and slowly, slowly, the color deserted his face until it was chalk-white. He raised his eyes from the affidavit to Carroll and lowered them under the baleful glare they met. When he raised them the second time there was mystification, wonder, utter helplessness in them.

"Well?" blazed Carroll.

Swayne started to his feet.

"Just a moment, Mr. Swayne," warned the president in a voice that had become suddenly and strangely quiet. "You had better stay here while we look into this." He rose, went to the door, and spoke to a clerk.

"Please bring all the securities of all kinds now in our vaults," he directed, "and send messengers to bring the ones in safety-deposit vaults elsewhere. Bring them all to me personally—not to Mr. Swayne."

He closed the door and turned back to the secretary. The color surged into Swayne's face, and he stood closing and unclosing his hands spasmodically. After a while he spoke and his voice was steady and quiet.

"Am I to understand that you accuse me of—of stealing those bonds?"

"The bonds are missing," was the reply. "They were in your care. Whether they were misappropriated or lost, the result is the same. Those bonds were intrusted to us to protect our customers. We are responsible for them; you are responsible to the firm."

Swayne dropped back into a chair. He was utterly at a loss for words. Carroll busied himself until, at last, there came a respectful rap on the door. He unlocked it, and the clerk entered with the securities.

"Is this all of them?" asked Carroll.

"All, sir, except about six hundred thousand dollars' worth in a safety-deposit vault farther uptown. A messenger is on his way with them now."

Carroll dismissed the clerk with a curt nod and spilled the securities on a table. Then he spoke to Swayne again. There was a singular softening of his tone.

"Really, I'm very sorry, Mr. Swayne," he said gently. "I trusted you implicitly, and I daresay every stockholder in the company did. Now, whether you are at fault or not remains to be seen. We must



recognize the fact that if those bonds are missing, as the affidavit asserts, other bonds may also be missing. The entire lot will have to be verified. I shall do that personally.

"Please don't misunderstand me," Carroll went on. "You are not a prisoner. This doesn't concern the police—as yet. It would not be safe even for our office force to know what has happened. It might precipitate disaster. Meanwhile, go on about your duties as if nothing had happened."

"My God, Charlie, you don't believe I stole those securities, do you?" Swayne burst out as he rose to his feet.

"That's the first time you have called me that since I have been president of this company," Carroll remarked irrelevantly. "I want to like you, Gordon. I've always wanted to be friends, but of late you have seemed deliberately to antagonize me. This is a disagreeable duty," and he indicated the securities on the table. "I must not be interrupted until I have checked them thoroughly. It is as necessary to you as to me. Now, go on about your work."

For an hour, perhaps, Swayne sat at his desk gazing across the office. Half a dozen questions were asked; he didn't answer. Slowly there came a change in his manner; a strong determination seized upon him and at last it brought him to his feet. For only an instant he hesitated over the idea that had come to him, then he went over and spoke to the girl at the switchboard.

"I want to talk to this number on my private wire," he told her.

He put down a slip of paper with a number on it, and within a few minutes he was speaking to The Thinking Machine.

"This is Gordon Swayne, Professor. Something has happened. I don't quite know what, but you told me if something did happen, something extraordinary, I was to call on you. Could you, sir, come to this office?"

"What happened?" asked The Thinking Machine irritably.

"I'm afraid it's a huge defalcation," Swayne told him. "Carroll has locked himself in his office—the room from which he disappeared previously—with millions of dollars' worth of securities he succeeded in getting hold of by a trick. And I believe as firmly as I believe I'm living that he has run away with them. It's the only way I can account for his strange actions. He went into the room an hour ago. I'd stake my life he isn't there now!"

"Why don't you knock on the door and ask to see him?"

"Please, sir, I beg of you to come at once. You will be completely baffled by what is going on here."

"Young man, I am never completely baffled. I'll be there immediately. And don't do anything absurd until I get there. And don't call the police. You are probably still suffering from the complaint I diagnosed for you. Goodbye."

Swayne forced himself to be calm. He glanced at the clock and sat down to wait. The minutes went by; then suddenly he rose, crossed the outer office, and rapped on the door of the private office. There was no response from inside. He tried the door. It was locked. Just then the door from the outside hall opened and The Thinking Machine entered. Swayne hastened to invite him to sit down, and in a voice almost inaudible from sheer excitement related the incidents of the morning in detail.

"I believe—I *know*—Carroll has stolen those securities," Swayne burst out at last, "and he is trying to cover up by accusing me."

For several minutes The Thinking Machine sat silently squinting upward with slender fingers tip to tip; then he stood up and adjusted his glasses.

"Where is the Directors' Room?" he asked. "Since the door to the private office is locked, I'll examine the other room."

Swayne rose and led the way. The door to the meeting room was only a few feet from the locked door to the private office. The scientist stopped as he passed it and read the placard, then followed Swayne.

There was nothing unusual in the Directors' Room; just a large table in the center, with comfortable chairs around it, and across a door—evidently the nailed-up one leading into Carroll's office—was a large and very heavy couch. Two windows faced a side street and one was open. A door directly across from the windows evidently opened into the hallway.

"Is this room ever used for anything except the directors' and stockholders' meetings?" The Thinking Machine wanted to know.

"No, never," answered Swayne.

"Why is this window open?"

"The cleaning woman may have accidentally left it open when she cleaned the room this morning."

"Does that door there," and he indicated it, "lead into the hallway?"

"Yes, but it is kept locked. The directors come here through the outer office and go out that way."

The Thinking Machine glanced at the open window, then turned and crossed the room. He opened the outside door and looked into the hallway.

"Did you say this door is always kept locked?" he asked Swayne.

"Always, sir."

"Did the cleaning woman accidentally leave it unlocked?"

"I—I don't know," stammered Swayne. "Was it unlocked?"

The scientist inspected the hallway. Stairs to the floors below were opposite. He came back into the meeting room, and Swayne carefully locked the door. He also closed the open window. While he was doing it The Thinking Machine went to the outer door.

"I'll take another look at the hallway," he said.

The look was just a glance. He came back in and closed the door. And Swayne led the way back to the outer office.

Once again as he passed, the scientist stopped and read the placard. Swayne waited.

"What do you make of it, Professor?" he asked at last.

The professor looked at his watch, checked it with the office clock.

"We will wait for half an hour," he said. "Then if Mr. Carroll does not answer a knock, I advise you to break the lock."

The minutes ticked by. Swayne fidgeted and occasionally fussed with some papers on his desk, while the scientist sat calm, unruffled, glancing every now and then at the clock. The bustling activity of the office slowed.

"The exchange has closed now."

"Yes," said Swayne. "More than ten minutes ago."

"You will knock on Mr. Carroll's door, Mr. Swayne, and this time if he doesn't answer we will find out why."

Swayne promptly rose and crossed the room, the little scientist at his heels. He paused an instant at Carroll's door.

"Well, knock!" commanded the scientist irritably.

Swayne knocked, then rapped a little more insistently. After a moment he heard the key being turned in the lock. He drew back just as the door swung open and Carroll, in person, stood in the doorway.

"I demand those securities!" Swayne burst out furiously. "Where are they?"

"Right here." Carroll indicated his desk. "All of them. I have checked everything and nothing is missing. Now will you please

lock them up again?" Then he added, "You are a childish idiot, Gordon, for suspecting me. Come, let's be friends again."

"But how—?" Swayne began in astonishment. "The affidavit—"

"Oh, that!" And Carroll dismissed such a trivial thing with a shrug. His eyes fell on the scientist. "And who is this gentleman?" he asked affably.

"He is Professor Van Dusen, scientist and logician."

"Oh, The Thinking Machine! I have heard about you, Professor, from a newspaperman I know, Hutchinson Hatch. What can I do for you, sir?"

"You can answer one question—at my house. Any time you like. Good day."

The explanation of the problem of the vanishing man, as The Thinking Machine stated it, was ludicrously simple. After Carroll had returned the securities intact, thus putting an end to Swayne's suspicions that he had stolen them, the secretary had stalked out of the office still very angry. Now, he sat gloomily in The Thinking Machine's reception room.

"You see, Mr. Swayne, my first diagnosis fits the case," the little scientist pointed out. "Curiosity with complications. In this instance you could not, or would not, see anything but the obvious, in the set and inflexible way you men of business have. A little imagination would have helped you, imagination coupled with a knowledge of the rudimentary rules of logic; just as it helped Mr. Carroll. Logic doesn't make mistakes; it is as infallible as that two and two make four not *sometime* but *all* the time.

"I knew from your first statement of this case that Mr. Carroll was a comparatively poor man, even though he is the head of a great company. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred every man, personally, wants to be rich. We will credit Mr. Carroll with such an ambition. He had increased the earnings of his company but, evidently, not his own. He decided to do so.

"In the stock market—and I know just enough about the market to know that money begets money—it is possible to make or lose millions in an hour. All Mr. Carroll had to do was to get the firm's millions of dollars' worth of securities in his possession for just an hour to make a fortune in the open market. Am I right?"

"Yes," admitted Swayne.

"And that is precisely what he did. By a trick. That affidavit which he wrote himself and you took at its face value—he got them together

in a way that did not arouse even your suspicions of the truth. We must infer that he made money by the use of the securities or he would not have had them to return to the company. That was what I thought might have happened if he did not open his door after the exchange closed—that he had lost them. I suggested waiting that half hour to give him a chance to get back to his office with the securities—if he had them. Of course, in using the company's money to make money for himself, he technically committed a crime, but—”

“Then he himself was the criminal when he accused me of stealing those government bonds!”

“By accusing you of appropriating or misplacing those bonds,” the scientist pointed out, “he did the thing necessary for the success of his plan. He distracted your attention, confused you, and gave himself, even to you, the best possible excuse for getting all the securities together without your suspecting his real purpose. Mr. Carroll is a very remarkable, a very resourceful young man. He has what our mutual friend, Mr. Hatch, would say, a head on him. Now, if he is as honest as I think he is, he will confess his technical crime to the directors, and they'll be a lot of old biddies if they don't absolve him.”

“But how—how did he get out of his private office to use those securities in a market transaction? Can you answer me that?”

“It was simple enough,” was the reply. “Since there was no other way out except through the window, he must have left through that window.”

“But that's impossible!” Swayne exclaimed.

“Nothing is impossible,” snapped the scientist. “Please don't say that. It annoys me exceedingly. It is not impossible to climb out of a window, stand on the sill, then inch along a narrow ledge—”

“Ledge? What ledge?” interrupted Swayne.

“Logic told me, Mr. Swayne, that Mr. Carroll left his room by the window, inched his way to another window, and then climbed through that second window into another room. To do this there had to be a ledge—”

“But you didn't even look out of the windows!” interrupted Swayne again.

The Thinking Machine clucked peevishly.

“I didn't have to look out of the windows. I didn't have to *see* the ledge to know that it had to exist. Logic, man!—inexorable, indisputable logic!” The Thinking Machine almost smiled, then went on:

“Please remember, too, that Mr. Carroll was a famous college

athlete. He has the strength and steady nerve to accomplish the feat I give him credit for. And since the room he entered by the second window was not occupied—I don't have to remind you that we found the window in the Directors' Room open—he could pass through that room without being observed, and go out through the door leading into the hallway—which, also, need I remind you, was open. The door to the hallway led directly to the stairs. He took a chance of being seen in the corridor, but a little chance like that would not deter Mr. Carroll. It was, therefore, not impossible for Mr. Carroll to leave his office and the building, and stay away for hours with the door locked behind him to discourage curiosity seekers."

"But how did he get back into the meeting room with the securities? I locked that door to the hallway—"

"And I *un*locked it when I pretended to look into the hallway again. There is really no problem about this affair. There seems to be only a little matter of how much the transaction netted Mr. Carroll."

An hour later the Board of Directors of the Carroll, Swayne, McPartland Company met in the room adjoining Carroll's private office. The call had been issued by the secretary without consulting President Carroll. When all were assembled, the secretary stated the case briefly, but with evident rancor. Carroll listened until he had finished, then stood up.

"I am glad the directors have met here and now," he said. "I admit that I have committed a technical crime. By that crime I have made more than two million dollars. This company is old, it is conservative. If this affair becomes known in financial circles, I realize it will hurt us. You have your securities again, intact. I have made a fortune, and I had intended to offer the company one half of it. Gentlemen, will you accept it?"

There was a long argument among the directors, but finally acquiescence.

"And now," Carroll said, "I wish to tender my resignation as president of Carroll, Swayne, McPartland."

"Resignation?" echoed old Nick Carroll. "What do you mean, resignation? You young scoundrel, if you ever again mention resigning, I'll—why, confound it, we'll fire you! A man who can think of what you did and carry it out—why, Charlie, you're a wonder! And you'll stay right here. That's orders!" He banged the table with a lusty fist . . .

After the meeting Charles Duer Carroll called on The Thinking Machine at his house. The scientist received him in his laboratory.

"You said you wanted to ask me one question, Professor. I'm curious to know what it is," said Carroll.

"You went in and out of your office through the window, of course." It was not a question.

"How did you guess, Professor?"

"I didn't guess, I knew," the professor stated flatly. "With the door to the outer office locked on the inside and the only other door nailed up, the window was the only possible way you could get out."

"It took me some time to think of it," Carroll admitted. "But one morning I was standing on the sidewalk below and just happened to look up at my office window. For the first time I noticed the ledge just underneath it. But it took days of careful planning and many practice attempts at swinging myself in and out of those windows before I tried it with the securities. I had to be sure that the window in the meeting room was left open and the hallway door unlocked. I knew the company's integrity had to be preserved at all costs, and I couldn't take anyone into my confidence."

"Here is my question, Mr. Carroll. Suppose—just suppose—you had found the hallway door in the meeting room locked when you came back that day with the securities? What would you have done?"

"I'd have bluffed my way through the outer office with a great deal of noise to confuse everybody, and I had the key to the locked private office safely in my pocket."

"Good!" It was the nearest thing to a compliment The Thinking Machine had ever uttered.

