CHAPTER XIII

ANTHONY SOMMERS paced up and down before the twelve men who would judge him for the crime of murder, shook his white mane, and pelted them with words. And in the ticker room of a Milwaukee newspaper Molly sat with Ted and followed his every utterance.

The Teletype machine, the newest miracle born of the press's great hunger for news hot from the oven of events, had brought the trial to them along a thousand miles of wire.

In a room across the corridor from the court a man sat bent over a typewriter. He wrote swiftly from his longhand hieroglyphics, squinting one eye because of the smoke that writhed away from the end of his cigarette. When he had finished half a page he ripped it from his mill, handed it to a boy, put in a fresh page, drew in on his cigarette, and went on with Anthony Sommers's plea.

The boy hurried to the office of the Continental Press Association, and within a few minutes the ticker was making its cabalistic marks on the tape, the impulse was going to newspaper offices in big cities all over the nation; and the Teletypes were boil-

ing like coffee in giant percolators, and overflowing with words—typewritten words translated from the dots and dashes of the ticker tape.

The ticker room of the Milwaukee *Chronicle* contained two of these Teletypes. They rested side by side on a wide table set against the wall, large oblong metal boxes, each with a round motor tucked in its left side; and a roll of yellow paper, carried like a knapsack, at its back. The paper ran, without beginning and without end, it seemed to Ted, from the knapsack roll, through the mysterious insides, and out through the noisy mouths.

The mouths of these curious monsters were on the top, and what they fed on went not into their mouths but out of them. The typewriter keys that unhuman unseen hands banged against the black ribbon, against the yellow paper, were like teeth that left a mark when they bit. But Molly thought of them as little tongues.

"They are tongues that talk in letters," she said. "and the paper is a voice, my father's voice."

"They're something like electric pianos," said Ted. "A roll of perforated paper——"

"—Falling like a sheet of water over rocks——"

"And the piano keys rise and fall, just like the typewriter keys——"

"—Making music!" she finished. "Man snatches the lightnings out of the sky and makes them play, and write. He makes them do housework." She was

silent a moment, then said slowly, "And he makes them kill people—in the electric chair!"

She sat quietly in her chair, a slim girl in a gray dress, her hands resting in her lap, her legs stretched out and crossed at the ankles. Her gray eyes were soft, and though they had looked at the machines until the name Teletype, and the name of the firm that made them—Morkrum Kleinschmidt, Chicago—were stamped into her mind, Ted knew she was looking through them, had found the Court of General Sessions in New York, and was gazing at her father.

The ticker room was little bigger than a closet. It was hot, and the electric fan did not cool it. It was lit by a single bulb that hung from the ceiling. It had no window. The board floor smelled of carbolic acid and printers' ink and newsprint. The walls were decorated with signs—"Accuracy"—"Don't Write on the Walls"—and with pictures of newspaper idols, Lindbergh, Dempsey, Babe Ruth, Harry Thaw, the elder La Follette, and Peggy Joyce.

Above the Teletypes there was a long narrow shelf stacked with rolls of yellow paper. Molly and Ted sat on either side of the door, Ted sprawling over his chair and feeling cramped. The Teletypes were both busy. One wrote of baseball games and markets and divorces and accidents and the doings of presidential candidates; and one, that nearer Molly, wrote of nothing but the trial.

The door was open. Somewhere below great presses rumbled. The floor vibrated to them. Outside the door, in the local room, telephones rang and telegraph instruments stuttered and clicked. Typewriters chattered. Heels pounded on the floor. Men shouted, "Boy!" Hidden things rattled and banged in the shiny pneumatic tubes. Upstairs the linotypes gossiped and cackled and shuffled their leaden cards. Ink-smeared boys ran into the ticker room every little while to snatch a piece of the yellow paper, and to hurry away again.

Ted had brought the Sommers family to Milwaukee that morning, and he and Molly had arrived at the *Chronicle* office just in time to get a front seat, and hear Sommers talk to the jury. He blamed himself now that he hadn't thought of the *Chronicle* and Bill Edens sooner. For three days he had let Molly go without news of the trial, save for the meagre paragraphs in Sommerville's daily, and the warmed-over news in the big city papers that came into Sommerville a day or two after they were printed. Imagine forgetting Bill Edens at such a time! Bill had been one of his classmates, had played left end on the eleven Ted had captained. He owned the *Chronicle* and edited it.

However, Molly was here now for the most important part of the trial; and her mother and sisters were at the Plankington. Mrs. Sommers, he knew, would sit by the window—in easy reach of the

telephone—all day long. The girls—perhaps they were out shopping. It was a holiday for the three youngest ones—and maybe Ella would enjoy it, too. Poor Ella!

How calm Molly was! The orchids looked nice against her gray dress. There went that playful yellow lock again, falling across her eyes. The gray leather of her handbag matched her dress, and her eyes.

She had floored Bill Edens. Ted could think of no other word for it. The way Bill had looked at her! You'd think Molly owned the paper and Bill was asking her for a job. "Miss Sommers, I am more honoured than I can say. The whole plant is yours. I'm almost glad you had to come here to get the news. Wouldn't it have been wonderful if we could have put the trial on the air? Then you could have sat in your own home and heard your father talking. Have you a radio? Why didn't Ted think of bringing you a week ago? He used to think fast enough when he was in college—especially when he was caught by the dean. Did you come through Madison? Beautiful, isn't it? Your father's a whizz, Miss Sommers. The questions he asks—good Lord!"

Ted smiled, remembering. He noticed that even the copy boys stole looks at Molly, and that some of the reporters craned their necks as they passed the door. He realized that in this office Molly was more of a sensation than the trial itself.

He glanced idly at the machine near him.

"But with clever lies I shall not save myself," he read.

That was like the old boy, he mused. Sommers always could make a good talk. He'd have that jury mesmerized before he was through. He remembered a Fourth of July oration Sommers had made at the fair grounds years ago. Yes, he'd have them mesmerized—and he'd probably talk all afternoon. He glanced from the machine, leaped suddenly to Molly's side.

"Why, why, Molly! You're crying."

"Crying? I never cry, Ted. Oh, if I am crying it's because I'm so proud. He'd rather lose his life than save it with a lie!"

The machine stopped with the last word of Sommers's plea, and started again. It wrote:

Sommers walked to his chair, but before he could seat himself the tense room had become a place of mad uproar.

There was such a stillness that it seemed the great lawyer's words could be heard reëchoing from the walls. The next moment that stillness was smashed. Men and women shouted, clapped their hands, leaped up and ran toward Sommers, some of them with tears in their eyes. In vain Judge Ingersoll pounded on the bench. In vain court attachés cried for silence.

The few policemen present sprang into action with fists and clubs, hurling back the fanatic members of the crowd. Someone turned in a riot call, and the thousands of people in the court, in the corridor outside, and on the

stairways and the corridors below, and in the rotunda of the building, were hustled into the streets as soon as a hundred uniformed men could do it. Several women are reported to have been hurt.

Flash! "This comes near to being a mistrial," Judge Ingersoll said, his voice sounding strange in the almost enpty room. "The demonstration for the defendant may leave some prejudice in the minds of the jurors."

His honour conferred in whispers with the attorneys, and then admonished the jurors that they were not to allow themselves to be swayed by the actions of the spectators.

"Do you wish to cross-examine the defendant?" he asked Mr. Keen.

"No, your honour," Keen replied. "But if the Court please, I should like a recess of ten minutes before I begin my closing statement."

Note to editors: Will have late news story featuring the riot. Understand at least a dozen men and women hurt. End note.

Bill Edens dashed into the little room, struggling into his coat.

"The home edition's gone to bed," he said. "Could I interest you people in a cup of hot coffee and a bun with do-jiggers on it? There's a place around the corner where the gang eats. A bit dirty—but we can snatch a bite and run."

"Thanks," said Molly. "But I must 'phone Mother. I couldn't possibly eat. I'm afraid I'm too excited. But—would you bring me some black coffee? And could I see the papers of yesterday, Mr. Edens, and

the day before, and of Monday? I want to read every line about the trial."

"Sure. I'll send you all the coffee one boy can carry," Edens promised. "And all the back copies another boy can lift, if you want them. Stay right here, or use my office. This is the first time I ever really admired orchids. But may I feed your escort?"

He was gone, Ted tagging at his heels.

CHAPTER XIV

"You're a lucky whelp," Edens said, between gulps of bitter coffee. "Ted, I'd like to make a five-column cut of her face, for the final edition. I'd plaster it all over page one. Bet it'd sell fifty thousand extras."

"No, no," said Ted quickly. "No pictures, Bill. She wouldn't stand for it. She's as proud as——"

"Proud? A blind man could see that. The way she carries herself. The poise of her. The look in her eyes. And she walks straight—not a slouch in a mile. I could write poetry about that girl."

Ted laughed, and a fatuous grin spread over his face. His big hands squeezed the thick cup.

"You should have seen her when she was a kid, walking along Main Street with her pigtails hanging down her back. They were so heavy they just naturally held her head up and made her walk straight. Folks used to think she was—you know—stuck-up."

"Ted, let me have her photo, and I'll run it when you marry her—damn you. 'Wisconsin's Grid Hero Weds State Beauty!' That'd go clear across eight columns. And underneath that I'd put another line—'Jealous Editor Poisons Bridegroom.' Gimme that check. We've got to beat it back."

Ted stayed in the local room until he finished his cigarette, watching the reporters write, the copy boys run, the copy readers edit with irreverent pencils.

The Teletypes were half through Anson Keen's address when he threw away his cigarette and took his seat by Molly. She had a little pile of newspapers on her lap, a tin cup of coffee in her hand, and she was absorbed in the prosecutor's talk.

"Gentlemen [Keen was saying], Anthony Sommers went shopping for his lies, as he might shop for a necktie. The lie about the bloody nose was shown him by one part of his brain—but was rejected. It was not good enough. The lie about the sleeping powders appealed to him, but only slightly. He put that aside, too, and began to hunt for the perfect lie—the frame-up lie.

"Now I have no respect for Big Joe Carozzo. I believe he would lie if it suited his purpose better than the truth. I have the utmost contempt for him, and for all his associates. But you must admit that they could not have lied on the witness stand. Their stories must be true because they fit together so perfectly. Each bit of testimony given by Carozzo, by Mora, by Marcia, by Theresa, by Mickey Finn, by the waiter, by the captain of police, the detectives, the doctors, and the other witnesses, interlocks with the rest of the testimony. The stories told by all these witnesses make a mosaic, a perfect picture.

"If you throw out Carozzo's testimony you must throw out Captain O'Malley's, and Dr. Korn's.

"Sommers looks at this picture of a dastardly cold-blooded crime, a crime of his own planning and execution, and shouts 'Frame-up! I was drunk! I was asleep! I was doped! Damn whisky!'

"Adam blamed the woman. Sommers blames the drink. Is it possible one pint of whisky put this famous drinker to sleep? Why, all his associates know that Sommers isn't a one-pint drunkard. He's a two-quart man. I myself have seen him stagger into court—aye, I've seen him carried before the bar of justice when he was too drunk to walk—and I've seen him, in that condition, win some of the most difficult cases of his career.

"Anthony Sommers too drunk to know what happened in that room? If it wasn't so colossal a lie, it would be a tragic joke. Anthony Sommers drunk enough to be framed? Impossible."

Ted couldn't understand Molly's calm. She must be reading every word the unseen hands were writing. But it had no more effect upon her, it seemed to him, than the electric bulb that swung above her head.

"One by one [Keen went on], Sommers thinks up lies, and discards them—knowing we could prove each one of them to be a lie. Finally he reaches the perfect lie, the one he regards as perfect. 'I was asleep,' he says, 'and I know not what occurred. I must have been framed.'

"'Framed!' The word has an ugly sound. I do not like it. It puts me into Carozzo's crowd. Either I am with them in this frame-up, or else I am too stupid to realize it is a frame-up. Sommers is framed, he says. Who framed him? Carozzo? No. Carozzo and all his companions. Gentlemen, when you put six or seven or eight people into a frame-up, the thing begins to look a little ridiculous. Why not put in a hundred, a thousand, all the people of New York?

"'Framed!' It is so easy to say. There is hardly a man put on trial for his life who doesn't cry out 'I am framed!'

And who frames him? The men he hates, the men and women who testify against him, the police who arrest him, the district attorney who brings him to the bar of justice, and the judge and jury who convict and punish him.

"Anthony Sommers was drunk—and framed. If anyone framed him it was the man he skewered with the spindle. It was——"

The machine stopped without warning, broke again into feverish clamour.

Flash [it wrote]: Case goes to jury 3.36 New York time. [After a moment it went on with the balance of Keen's address.]

"Sommers said he would rather be accused of murder than of gum chewing. He is accused of murder.

"Why does he try to make gum chewing a crime? Merely to divert your minds from the murder.

"Gentlemen of the jury, some men speak that way of cigarettes. Yet cigarette smokers and gum chewers won the war. We sent our boys in France tons and tons of gum and cigarettes. To make them ferocious? No. To give them little comforts, to make them feel that even though they fought under an alien sky they were still Americans—chewers of gum, smokers of cigarettes. Gum! If you ride in the subways of New York——"

Ted turned from the machine.

"A few minutes more," he whispered, "just a few minutes." He took Molly's hand. It was cold.

"You're worried," he said.

"Worried? Ted, I'm frightened. If I didn't know my father so well—I'd think he had told a silly lie.

And that jury—'Anthony Sommers drunk enough to be framed? Impossible!' Of course he wasn't. Of course it's impossible! What did happen in that room? Was he drugged, struck on the head, temporarily blinded? If I were a juror——"

He laughed at her.

"Why, those twelve men will walk into that court room in a few minutes, Molly. And your father will come home in a few days—for our wedding."

She shook her head slowly. "I'm afraid," she said again.

CHAPTER XV

THE hours crawled across the little room. The unseen hands wrote on, telling the news of far places. Molly glanced at the machines now and then, or read the papers, or talked to Ted. Edens begged her to come into his office and wait for the verdict, but she preferred to wait in the uncomfortable ticker room.

It was nearly five o'clock Central time when the verdict came to them.

Flash! Sommers verdict coming.

There wasn't a sound in all the building save the sound of the nervous Teletype. The men in the local room had gone, all save one who sat at a quarter-moon desk looking through the columns of the late editions. A copy boy sat on a bench near the desk, his freckled face hidden by Mr. Wells' *Outline of History*.

At the summons of the Teletype he put down his book, went into the ticker room, tore out the paper and carried it to the desk. The man looked at it, reached lazily for a telephone, spoke into it, rolled himself a brown-paper cigarette, and walked to the ticker-room door. Edens came out of his office, hurriedly, and he had but two words to say—"Good luck!"

Molly bent over the machine, her hands on her

heart, the little lock of hair falling across her eye.

Flash—Judge Ingersoll is on the bench—Sommers arrives with his guards—the verdict——

Ted, staring at the typewriter keys that banged against the black ribbon and the yellow paper, had a vision of those twelve men shambling into the court room. They carried their hats in their hands. One of them held a piece of paper, the verdict written on it. It seemed strange and unjust to him that these men who had never seen him, and never would see him, these men who didn't know he was on earth, and didn't care, should have this almost Godlike power to shape his life.

If they had found Sommers not guilty they would give Ted Morehouse a bride. If their verdict should be guilty—— He took up the tin cup that had held Molly's coffee, and squeezed it flat.

He moved close to the girl.

Verdict—Sommers guilty—murder second degree—twenty years to life imprisonment. . . .

"Prison!" Molly's lips formed the word but could not speak it.

The man with the brown-paper cigarette vanished from the doorway. Edens followed him. The unseen hands continued writing.

Far away, it seemed, someone was shouting into a telephone. Presently the presses began to rumble, and the floor to vibrate. Molly and Ted stood long before the Teletype, silent.

When she looked at him she saw that his eyes were wet, and that his hands had twisted the tin cup into a shapeless mass. She took one of his hands and pressed it. And a little drop of blood fell from her lip.