

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

### ASHES TO ASHES.\*

This book deals with the extraordinary psychology of an apparently normal, healthy and prosperous man, Norman Storm, who, yielding to a sudden and insane fit of unreasonable jealousy, murdered his young and charming wife, to whom he was devoted, and with diabolical cunning and coolness covered up his tracks so that his terrible deed was unsuspected and her death was attributed to accident.

At first his terrible deed overwhelmed him with horror, but by degrees he became infatuated with the idea of his own craftiness and cleverness in its concealment.

His charming house in a New York suburb became impossible to him, and he took a furnished flat from a friend in the city itself, where George Holworthy, his old friend, and a devoted admirer of his wife's, did his rather clumsy best to help him to forget his supposed grief.

Norman had always been given to speculation, and he shortly after fell a victim to a swindler, and lost practically the whole of his capital. He held a lucrative post in the Mammoth Trust Company, but seized as he was with a longing to escape from a life that held such terrible memories, he realised that he was no longer in a position to cut adrift from his position.

It was at this juncture that he accidentally met at a railway station an old school friend, a common, good-natured man, with whom he had not much in common, but who, in the disordered state of his nerves, he welcomed as a distraction, and invited to his rooms.

"Fact is," he said, "I'm paymaster now for one of the biggest coal companies in Pennsylvania."

"There's more Scotch—" Storm began, suggestively.

"Not for me, thanks. I'm at peace with the world. If it weren't for that bag of mine—"

"What's in it, anyway?" Storm asked idly. "Money for your gang out there?"

"You've guessed it, son." Horton placed the bag on the table and opened it. "Have a look."

Storm obeyed. Packets of yellow-backed bills, sheaves on sheaves of them, met his gaze, and cylinders of coins.

"Do you know how much I've got here, old scout? One hundred and twelve thousand five hundred and fifty-two dollars and eight-four cents."

From that moment Storm's brain began to work.

How ridiculously small and flimsy the black bag looked to contain such tremendous potentialities. Storm felt a wave of unaccountable hatred for the other man sweeping over him. What right had Jack Horton to flaunt that money in his face? Heaven! If it were only his!

"Say, look here, old scout. For the love of Pete don't mention it. I told you in confidence, old scout. It would mean my job if the company

heard I had been flashing the pay-roll. They must never know I stopped in town. You're the only living soul who knows where I am this minute."

"The only living soul who knows where I am." The words rang in Storm's ears with the insistence of a tolling bell, and a tremendous sinister idea was born. Nothing stood between him and the money there before his eyes, within reach of his hand, but this cocksure fathead. Jack Horton would guard that bag while he lived. *While he lived.*

Before midnight Jack Horton was done to death by Storm, and his crime covered with the same craftiness as before.

Much of the interest of this story lies in the clever description of the details of concealment, and the extraordinary mentality of the man who absolutely gloated over his diabolical cleverness—the same man who, until a month previously, had been an ordinary, commonplace human being.

His old friend, George, was destined to be the person to denounce him. Storm had viewed with great uneasiness his friend's interest in the details of the murder that he gathered from the Press, as little by little the chain of circumstantial evidence became evident even to George's slow perception.

Storm's distorted mind once more set to work to rid himself of the menace in that direction, and George would undoubtedly have met the same fate as the previous victims, had he not laid information when he did.

Ashes play a part in both crimes, in the necessary destruction of the evidences of his guilt in the case of his wife, and in the remains of the good cigars which poor Jack Horton had so enjoyed just before his tragic death.

We admit that the story is gruesome, but it causes the reader to pause and ask—under the surface of how many apparently careless and pleasant people is hid the brute, which, if once unchained, could transform them into a monster such as Norman Storm.

H. H.

### THE CALLOUS ONE.

Death fumbled softly at her door  
When the old house was thick with sleep;  
"Who's there?" she cried within, and he:  
"You weep, I hear you weep."

Startled, she screamed out then: "Last night  
I wept; you came not, why come now?  
Now, now I weep for joy, for joy,  
My lover kissed my brow."

Her first, her last, that plighting kiss,  
Unless death kissed her while she spoke:  
Her lips were cold, like flowers at dawn,  
When the old house awoke.

By Daniel Corkery.

### A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

How little can be done under the spirit of fear.

Florence Nightingale.

\* By Isabel Ostrander. Hurst & Blackett.

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