Teal was killed last night.”

The Old Man—the Continental Detective Agency's San Francisco manager — spoke without looking at me. His voice was as mild as his smile, and gave no indication of the turmoil that was seething in his mind.

If I kept quiet, waiting for the Old Man to go on, it wasn't because the news didn't mean anything to me. I had been fond of Bob Teal — we all had. He had come to the Agency fresh from college two years before; and if ever a man had the makings of a crack detective in him, this slender, broad-shouldered lad had. Two years is little enough time in which to pick up the first principles of sleuthing, but Bob Teal, with his quick eye, cool nerve, balanced head, and whole-hearted interest in the work, was already well along the way to expertness. I had an almost fatherly interest in him, since I had given him most of his early training.

The Old Man didn't look at me as he went on. He was talking to the open window at his elbow.

“He was shot with a thirty-two, twice, through the heart. He was shot behind a row of signboards on the vacant lot on the northwest corner of Hyde and Eddy Streets, at about ten last night. His body was found by a patrolman a little after eleven. The gun was found about fifteen feet away. I have seen him and I have gone over the ground myself. The rain last night wiped out any leads the ground may have held, but from the condition of Teal's clothing and the position in which he was found, I would say that there was no struggle, and that he was shot where he was found, and not carried there afterward. He was lying behind the signboards, about thirty feet from the sidewalk, and his hands were empty. The gun was held close enough to him to singe the breast of his coat. Apparently no one either saw or heard the shooting. The rain and wind would have kept pedestrians off the street, and would have deadened the reports of a thirty-two, which are not especially loud, anyway.”

The Old Man's pencil began to tap the desk, its gentle clicking setting my nerves on edge. Presently it stopped, and the Old Man went on:

“Teal was shadowing a Herbert Whitacre — had been shadowing him for three days. Whitacre is one of the partners in the firm Ogburn and Whitacre, farm-development engineers. They have options on a large area of land in several of the new irrigation districts. Ogburn handles the sales end, while Whitacre looks after the rest of the

business, including the bookkeeping.

“Last week Ogburn discovered that his partner had been making false entries. The books show certain payments made on the land, and Ogburn learned that these payments had not been made. He estimates that the amount of Whitacre's thefts may be anywhere from one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty thousand dollars. He came in to see me three days ago and told me all this, and wanted to have Whitacre shadowed in an endeavour to learn what he has done with the stolen money. Their firm is still a partnership, and a partner cannot be prosecuted for stealing from the partnership, of course. Thus, Ogburn could not have his partner arrested, but he hoped to find the money, and then recover it through civil action. Also he was afraid that Whitacre might disappear.

“I sent Teal out to shadow Whitacre, who supposedly didn't know that his partner suspected him. Now I am sending you out to find Whitacre. I'm determined to find him and convict him if I have to let all regular business go and put every man I have on this job for a year. You can get Teal's reports from the clerks. Keep in touch with me.”

All that, from the Old Man, was more than an ordinary man's oath written in blood.

In the clerical office I got the two reports Bob had turned in. There was none for the last day, of course, as he would not have written that until after he had quit work for the night. The first of these two reports had already been copied and a copy sent to Ogburn; a typist was working on the other now.

In his reports Bob had described Whitacre as a man of about thirty-seven, with brown hair and eyes, a nervous manner, a smooth-shaven, medium-complexioned face, and rather small feet. He was about five feet eight inches tall, weighed about a hundred and fifty pounds, and dressed fashionably, though quietly. He lived with his wife in an apartment on Gough Street. They had no children. Ogburn had given Bob a description of Mrs. Whitacre: a short, plump, blond woman of something less than thirty.

Those who remember this affair will know that the city, the detective agency, and the people involved all had names different from the ones I have given them. But they will know also that I have kept the facts true. Names of some sort are essential to clearness, and when the use of the real names might cause embarrassment, or pain even, pseudonyms are the most satisfactory alternative.

In shadowing Whitacre, Bob had learned nothing that seemed to be of any value in finding the stolen money. Whitacre had gone about his usual business, apparently, and Bob had seen him do nothing downright suspicious. But Whitacre had seemed nervous, had often stopped to look around, obviously suspecting that he was being shadowed without being sure of it. On several occasions Bob had had to drop him to avoid being recognised. On one of these occasions, while waiting in the vicinity of Whitacre's

residence for him to return, Bob had seen Mrs. Whitacre — or a woman who fit the description Ogburn had given — leave in a taxicab. Bob had not tried to follow her, but he made a memorandum of the taxi's license number.

These two reports read and practically memorised, I left the Agency and went down to Ogburn & Whitacre's suite in the Packard Building. A stenographer ushered me into a tastefully furnished office, where Ogburn sat at a desk signing mail. He offered me a chair. I introduced myself to him, a medium-sized man of perhaps thirty-five, with sleek brown hair and the cleft chin that is associated in my mind with orators, lawyers, and salesmen.

“Oh, yes!” he said, pushing aside the mail, his mobile, intelligent face lighting up. “Has Mr. Teal found anything?”

“Mr. Teal was shot and killed last night.”

He looked at me blankly for a moment out of wide brown eyes, and then repeated: “Killed?”

“Yes,” I replied, and told him what little I knew about it.

“You don't think —” he began when I had finished, and then stopped. “You don't think Herb would have done that?”

“What do you think?”

“I don't think Herb would commit murder! He's been jumpy the last few days, and I was beginning to think he suspected I had discovered his thefts, but I don't believe he would have gone that far, even if he knew Mr. Teal was following him. I honestly don't!”

“Suppose,” I suggested, “that sometime yesterday Teal found where he had put the stolen money, and then Whitacre learned that Teal knew it. Don't you think that under those circumstances Whitacre might have killed him?”

“Perhaps,” he said slowly, “but I'd hate to think so. In a moment of panic Herb might — but I really don't think he would.”

“When did you see him last?”

“Yesterday. We were here in the office together most of the day. He left for home a few minutes before six. But I talked to him over the phone later. He called me up at home at a little after seven, and said he was coming down to see me, wanted to tell me something. I thought he was going to confess his dishonesty, and that maybe we would

be able to straighten out this miserable affair. His wife called up at about ten. She wanted him to bring something from downtown when he went home, but of course he was not there. I stayed in all evening waiting for him, but he didn't —”

He stuttered, stopped talking, and his face drained white.

“My God, I'm wiped out!” he said faintly, as if the thought of his own position had just come to him. “Herb gone, money gone, three years' work gone for nothing! And I'm legally responsible for every cent he stole. God!”

He looked at me with eyes that pleaded for contradiction, but I couldn't do anything except assure him that everything possible would be done to find both Whitacre and the money. I left him trying frantically to get his attorney on the telephone.

From Ogburn's office I went up to Whitacre's apartment. As I turned the corner below into Gough Street I saw a big, hulking man going up the apartment house steps, and recognised him as George Dean. Hurrying to join him, I regretted that he had been assigned to the job instead of some other member of the police detective Homicide Detail. Dean isn't a bad sort, but he isn't so satisfactory to work with as some of the others; that is, you can never be sure that he isn't holding out some important detail so that George Dean would shine as the clever sleuth in the end. Working with a man of that sort, you're bound to fall into the habit — which doesn't make for teamwork.

I arrived in the vestibule as Dean pressed Whitacre's bell-button.

“Hello,” I said. “You in on this?”

“Uh-huh. What d'you know?”

“Nothing. I just got it.”

The front door clicked open, and we went together up to the Whitacres' apartment on the third floor. A plump, blond woman in a light blue house-dress opened the apartment door. She was rather pretty in a thick-featured, stolid way.

“Mrs. Whitacre?” Dean inquired.

“Yes.”

“Is Mr. Whitacre in?”

“No. He went to Los Angeles this morning,” she said, and her face was truthful.

“Know where we can get in touch with him there?”

“Perhaps at the Ambassador, but I think he'll be back by tomorrow or the next day.”

Dean showed her his badge.

“We want to ask you a few questions,” he told her, and with no appearance of astonishment she opened the door wide for us to enter. She led us into a blue and cream living-room where we found a chair apiece. She sat facing us on a big blue settle.

“Where was your husband last night?” Dean asked.

“Home. Why?” Her round blue eyes were faintly curious.

“Home all night?”

“Yes, it was a rotten rainy night. Why?” She looked from Dean to me.

Dean's glance met mine, and I nodded an answer to the question that I read there.

“Mrs. Whitacre,” he said bluntly, “I have a warrant for your husband's arrest.”

“A warrant? For what?”

“Murder.”

“Murder?” It was a stifled scream.

“Exactly, an' last night.”

“But —but I told you he was —”

“And Ogburn told me,” I interrupted, leaning forward, “that you called up his apartment last night, asking if your husband was there.”

She looked at me blankly for a dozen seconds, and then she laughed, the clear laugh of one who has been the victim of some slight joke.

“You win,” she said, and there was neither shame nor humiliation in either face or voice. “Now listen” — the amusement had left her — “I don't know what Herb has done, or how I stand, and I oughtn't to talk until I see a lawyer. But I like to dodge all the trouble I can. If you folks will tell me what's what, on your word of honour, I'll maybe tell you what I know, if anything. What I mean is, if talking will make things any easier for me, if you can show me it will, maybe I'll talk — provided I know anything.”

That seemed fair enough, if a little surprising. Apparently this plump woman who could lie with every semblance of candour, and laugh when she was tripped up, wasn't interested in anything much beyond her own comfort.

“You tell it,” Dean said to me.

I shot it out all in a lump.

“Your husband had been cooking the books for some time, and got into his partner for something like two hundred thousand dollars before Ogburn got wise to it. Then he had your husband shadowed, trying to find the money. Last night your husband took the man who was shadowing him over on a lot and shot him.”

Her face puckered thoughtfully. Mechanically she reached for a package of popular-brand cigarettes that lay on a table behind the settle, and proffered them to Dean and me. We shook our heads. She put a cigarette in her mouth, scratched a match on the sole of her slipper, lit the cigarette, and stared at the burning end. Finally she shrugged, her face cleared, and she looked up at us.

“I'm going to talk,” she said. “Never got any of the money, and I'd be a chump to make a goat of myself for Herb. He was all right, but if he's run out and left me flat, there's no use of me making a lot of trouble for myself over it. Here goes: I'm not Mrs. Whitacre, except on the register. My name is Mae Landis. Maybe there is a real Mrs. Whitacre, and maybe not. I don't know. Herb and I have been living together here for over a year.

“About a month ago he began to get jumpy, nervous, even worse than usual. He said he had business worries. Then a couple of days ago I discovered that his pistol was gone from the drawer where it had been kept ever since we came here, and that he was carrying it. I asked him: 'What's the idea?' He said he thought he was being followed, and asked me if I'd seen anybody hanging around the neighbourhood as if watching our place. I told him no; I thought he was nutty.

“Night before last he told me that he was in trouble, and might have to go away, and that he couldn't take me with him, but would give me enough money to take care of me for a while. He seemed excited, packed his bags so they'd be ready if he needed them in a hurry, and burned up all his photos and a lot of letters and papers. His bags are still in the bedroom, if you want to go through them. When he didn't come home last night I had a hunch that he had beat it without his bags and without saying a word to me, much less giving me any money — leaving me with only twenty dollars to my name and not even much that I could hock, and with the rent due in four days.”

“When did you see him last?”

“About eight o'clock last night. He told me he was going down to Mr. Ogburn's apartment to talk some business over with him, but he didn't go there. I know that. I ran out of cigarettes — I like Elixir Russians, and I can't get them uptown here — so I called up Mr. Ogburn's to ask Herb to bring some home with him when he came, and Mr. Ogburn said he hadn't been there.”

“How long have you known Whitacre?” I asked.

“Couple of years, I guess. I think I met him first at one of the beach resorts.”

“Has he got any people?”

“Not that I know of. I don't know a whole lot about him. Oh, yes! I do know that he served three years in prison in Oregon for forgery. He told me that one night when he was lushed up. He served them under the name of Barber, or Barbee, or something like that. He said he was walking the straight and narrow now.”

Dean produced a small automatic pistol, fairly new-looking in spite of the mud that clung to it, and handed it to the woman.

“Ever see that?”

She nodded her blond head. “Yep! That's Herb's or its twin.”

Dean pocketed the gun again, and we stood up.

“Where do I stand now?” she asked. “You're not going to lock me up as a witness or anything, are you?”

“Not just now,” Dean assured her. “Stick around where we can find you if we want you, and you won't be bothered. Got any idea which direction Whitacre'd be likely to go in?”

“No.”

“We'd like to give the place the once-over. Mind?”

“Go ahead,” she invited. “Take it apart if you want to. I'm coming all the way with you people.”

We very nearly did take the place apart, but we found not a thing of value. Whitacre, when he had burned the things that might have given him away, had made a clean job of it.

“Did he ever have any pictures taken by a professional photographer?” I asked just before we left.

“Not that I know of.”

“Will you let us know if you hear anything or remember anything else that might help?”

“Sure,” she said heartily; “sure.”

Dean and I rode down in the elevator in silence, and walked out into Gough Street.

“What do you think of all that?” I asked when we were outside.

“She's a lil, huh?” He grinned. “I wonder how much she knows. She identified the gun an' gave us that dope about the forgery sentence up north, but we'd of found out them things anyway. If she was wise she'd tell us everything she knew we'd find out, an' that would make her other stuff go over stronger. Think she's dumb or wise?”

“We won't guess,” I said. “We'll slap a shadow on her and cover her mail. I have the number of a taxi she used a couple days ago. We'll look that up too.”

At a corner drug store I telephoned the Old Man, asking him to detail a couple of the boys to keep Mae Landis and her apartment under surveillance night and day; also to have the Post Office Department let us know if she got any mail that might have been addressed by Whitacre. I told the Old Man I would see Ogburn and get some specimens of the fugitive's writing for comparison with the woman's mail.

Then Dean and I set about tracing the taxi in which Bob Teal had seen the woman ride away. Half an hour in the taxi company's office gave us the information that she had been driven to a number on Greenwich Street. We went to the Greenwich Street address.

It was a ramshackle building, divided into apartments or flats of a dismal and dingy sort. We found the landlady in the basement: a gaunt woman in soiled gray, with a hard, thin-lipped mouth and pale, suspicious eyes. She was rocking vigorously in a creaking chair and sewing on a pair of overalls, while three dirty kids tussled with a mongrel puppy up and down the room.

Dean showed his badge, and told her that we wanted to speak to her in privacy. She got up to chase the kids and their dog out, and then stood with hands on hips facing us.

“Well, what do you want?” she demanded sourly.

“Want to get a line on your tenants,” Dean said. “Tell us about them.”

“Tell you about them?” She had a voice that would have been harsh enough even if she hadn't been in such a peevish mood. “What do you think I got to say about 'em? What do you think I am? I'm a woman that minds her own business! Nobody can't say that I don't run a respectable —”

This was getting us nowhere.

“Who lives in number one?” I asked.

“The Auds — two old folks and their grandchildren. If you know anything against them, it's more'n them that has lived with 'em for ten years does!”

“Who lives in number two?”

“Mrs. Codman and her boys, Frank and Fred. They been here three years, and —”

I carried her from apartment to apartment, until finally we reached a second-floor one that didn't bring quite so harsh an indictment of my stupidity for suspecting its occupants of whatever it was that I suspected them of.

“The Quirks live there.” She merely glowered now, whereas she had had a snippy manner before. “And they're decent people, if you ask me!”

“How long have they been here?”

“Six months or more.”

“What does he do for a living?”

“I don't know.” Sullenly: “Travels, maybe.”

“How many in the family?”

“Just him and her, and they're nice quiet people, too.”

“What does he look like?”

“Like an ordinary man. I ain't a detective, I don't go 'round snoopin' into folks' faces to see what they look like, and prying into their business. I ain't —”

“How old a man is he?”

“Maybe between thirty-five and forty, if he ain't younger or older.”

“Large or small?”

“He ain't as short as you and he ain't as tall as this feller with you,” glaring scornfully from my short stoutness to Dean's big hulk, “and he ain't as fat as neither of you.”

“Moustache?”

“No.”

“Light hair?”

“No.” Triumphantly: “Dark.”

“Dark eyes, too?”

“I guess so.”

Dean, standing off to one side, looked over the woman's shoulder at me. His lips framed the name “Whitacre.”

“Now how about Mrs. Quirk — what does she look like?” I went on.

“She's got light hair, is short and chunky, and maybe under thirty.”

Dean and I nodded our satisfaction at each other; that sounded like Mae Landis, right enough.

“Are they home much?” I continued.

“I don't know,” the gaunt woman snarled sullenly, and I knew she did know, so I waited, looking at her, and presently she added grudgingly: “I think they're away a lot, but I ain't sure.”

“I know,” I ventured, “they are home very seldom, and then only in the daytime — and you know it.”

She didn't deny it, so I asked: “Are they in now?”

“I don't think so, but they might be.”

“Let's take a look at the joint,” I suggested to Dean.

He nodded and told the woman: “Take us up to their apartment an' Janlock the door for us.”

“I won't!” she said with sharp emphasis. “You got no right goin' into folks' homes unless you got a search warrant. You got one?”

“We got nothin'.” Dean grinned at her. “But we can get plenty if you want to put us to the trouble. You run this house; you can go into any of the flats any time you want, an' you can take us in. Take us up, an' we'll lay off you; but if you're going to put us to a lot of trouble, then you'll take your chances of bein' tied up with the Quirks, an' maybe sharin' a cell with 'em. Think that over.”

She thought it over, and then, grumbling and growling with each step, took us up to the Quirks' apartment. She made sure they weren't at home, then admitted us.

The apartment consisted of three rooms, a bath, and a kitchen, furnished in the shabby fashion that the ramshackle exterior of the building had prepared us for. In these rooms we found a few articles of masculine and feminine clothing, toilet accessories, and so on. But the place had none of the marks of a permanent abode: there were no pictures, no cushions, none of the dozens of odds and ends of personal belongings that are usually found in homes. The kitchen had the appearance of long disuse; the interiors of the coffee, tea, spice, and flour containers were clean.

Two things we found that meant something: a handful of Elixir Russian cigarettes on a table; and a new box of .32 cartridges — ten of which were missing — in a dresser drawer.

All through our searching the landlady hovered over us, her pale eyes sharp and curious; but now we chased her out, telling her that, law or no law, we were taking charge of the apartment.

“This was or is a hide-out for Whitacre and his woman all right,” Dean said when we were alone. “The only question is whether he intended to lay low here or whether it was just a place where he made preparations for his getaway. I reckon the best thing is to have the captain put a man in here night and day until we turn up Brother Whitacre.”

“That's safest,” I agreed, and he went to the telephone in the front room to arrange it.

After Dean was through phoning, I called up the Old Man to see if anything new had developed.

“Nothing new,” he told me. “How are you coming along?”

“Nicely. Maybe I'll have news for you this evening.”

“Did you get those specimens of Whitacre's writing from Ogburn? Or shall I have someone else take care of it?”

“I'll get them this evening,” I promised.

I wasted ten minutes trying to reach Ogburn at his office before I looked at my watch and saw that it was after six o'clock. I found his residence listed in the telephone directory, and called him there.

“Have you anything in Whitacre's writing at home?” I asked. “I want to get a couple of samples — would like to get them this evening, though if necessary I can wait until tomorrow.”

“I think I have some of his letters here. If you come over now I'll give them to you.”

“Be with you in fifteen minutes,” I told him.

“I'm going down to Ogburn's,” I told Dean, “to get some of Whitacre's scribbling while you're waiting for your man to come from headquarters to take charge of this place. I'll meet you at the States as soon as you can get away. We'll eat there, and make our plans for the night.”

“Uh-huh,” he grunted, making himself comfortable in one chair, with his feet on another, as I let myself out.

Ogburn was dressing when I reached his apartment, and had his collar and tie in his hand when he came to the door to let me in.

“I found quite a few of Herb's letters,” he said as we walked back to his bedroom.

I looked through the fifteen or more letters that lay on a table, selecting the ones I wanted, while Ogburn went on with his dressing.

“How are you progressing?” he asked presently.

“So-so. Heard anything that might help?”

“No, but just a few minutes ago I happened to remember that Herb used to go over to the Mills Building quite frequently. I've seen him going in and out often, but never thought anything of it. I don't know whether it is of any importance or —”

I jumped out of my chair.

“That does it!” I cried. “Can I use your phone?”

“Certainly. It's in the hallway, near the door.” He looked at me in surprise. “It's a slot phone; have you a nickel in change?”

“Yes.” I was going through the bedroom door.

“The switch is near the door,” he called after me, “if you want a light. Do you think —”

But I didn't stop to listen to his questions. I was making for the telephone, searching my pockets for a nickel. And, fumbling hurriedly with the nickel, I muffed it — not entirely by accident, for I had a hunch that I wanted to work out. The nickel rolled away down the carpeted hallway. I switched on the light, recovered the nickel, and called the “Quirks'“ number. I'm glad I played that hunch.

Dean was still there.

“That joint's dead.” I sang. “Take the landlady down to headquarters, and grab the Landis woman, too. I'll meet you there — at headquarters.”

“You mean it?” he rumbled.

“Almost,” I said, and hung up the receiver.

I switched off the hall light and, whistling a little tune to myself, walked back to the room where I had left Ogburn. The door was not quite closed. I walked straight up to it, kicked it open with one foot, and jumped back, ohugging the wall.

Two shots — so close together that they were almost one — crashed.

Flat against the wall, I pounded my feet against the floor and wainscot, and let out a medley of shrieks and groans that would have done credit to a carnival wild-man.

A moment later Ogburn appeared in the doorway, a revolver in his hand, his face wolfish. He was determined to kill me. It was my life or his, so —

I slammed my gun down on the sleek, brown top of his head.

When he opened his eyes, two policemen were lifting him into the back of a patrol wagon.

I found Dean in the detectives' assembly-room in the Hall of Justice.

“The landlady identified Mae Landis as Mrs. Quirk,” he said. “Now what?”

“Where is she now?”

“One of the policewomen is holding both of them in the captain's office.”

“Ogburn is over in the Pawnshop Detail office,” I told him. “Let's take the landlady in for a look at him.”

Ogburn sat leaning forward, holding his head in his hands' and staring sullenly at the feet of the uniformed man who guarded him, when we took the gaunt landlady in to see him.

“Ever see him before?” I asked her.

“Yes” — reluctantly — “that's Mr. Quirk.”

Ogburn didn't look up, and he paid not the least attention to any of us.

After we had told the landlady that she could go home, Dean led me back to a far corner of the assembly-room, where we could talk without disturbance.

“Now spill it!” he burst out. “How come all the startling developments, as the newspaper boys call 'em?”

“Well, first-off, I knew that the question 'Who killed Bob Teal?' could have only one answer. Bob wasn't a boob! He might possibly have let a man he was trailing lure him behind a row of billboards on a dark night, but he would have gone prepared for trouble. He wouldn't have died with empty hands, from a gun that was close enough to scorch his coat. The murderer had to be somebody Bob trusted, so it couldn't be Whitacre. Now Bob was a conscientious sort of lad, and he wouldn't have stopped shadowing Whitacre to go over and talk with some friend. There was only one man who could have persuaded him to drop Whitacre for a while, and that one man was the one he was working for — Ogburn.

“If I hadn't known Bob, I might have thought he had hidden behind the billboards to watch Whitacre; but Bob wasn't an amateur. He knew better than to pull any of that spectacular gumshoe stuff. So there was nothing to it but Ogburn!

“With all that to go on, the rest was duck soup. All the stuff Mae Landis gave us — identifying the gun as Whitacre's, and giving Ogburn an alibi by saying she had talked to him on the phone at ten o'clock — only convinced me that she and Ogburn were

working together. When the landlady described 'Quirk' for us, I was fairly certain of it. Her description would fit either Whitacre or Ogburn, but there was no sense to Whitacre's having the apartment on Greenwich Street, while if Ogburn and the Landis woman were thick, they'd need a meeting-place of some sort. The rest of the box of cartridges there helped some too.

“Then tonight I put on a little act in Ogburn's apartment, chasing a nickel along the floor and finding traces of dried mud that had escaped the cleaning-up he no doubt gave the carpet and clothes after he came home from walking through the lot in the rain. We'll let the experts decide whether it could be mud from the lot on which Bob was killed, and the jury can decide whether it is.

“There are a few more odds and ends — like the gun. The Landis woman said Whitacre had had it for more than a year, but in spite of being muddy it looks fairly new to me. We'll send the serial number to the factory, and find when it was turned out.

“For motive, just now all I'm sure of is the woman, which should be enough. But I think that when Ogburn and Whitacre's books are audited, and their finances sifted, we'll find something there. What I'm banking on strong is that Whitacre will come in, now that he is cleared of the murder charge.”

And that is exactly what happened.

Next day Herbert Whitacre walked into Police Headquarters at Sacramento and surrendered.

Neither Ogburn nor Mae Landis ever told what they knew, but with Whitacre's testimony, supported by what we were able to pick up here and there, we went into court when the time came and convinced the jury that the facts were these:

Ogburn and Whitacre had opened their farm-development business as a plain swindle. They had options on a lot of land, and they planned to sell as many shares in their enterprise as possible before the time came to exercise their options. Then they intended packing up their bags and disappearing. Whitacre hadn't much nerve, and he had a clear remembrance of the three years he had served in prison for forgery; so to bolster his courage, Ogburn had told his partner that he had a friend in the Post Office Department in Washington, D.C., who would tip him off the instant official suspicion was aroused.

The two partners made a neat little pile out of their venture, Ogburn taking charge of the money until the time came for the split-up. Meanwhile, Ogburn and Mae Landis — Whitacre's supposed wife — had become intimate, and had rented the apartment on Greenwich Street, meeting there afternoons when Whitacre was busy at the office, and when Ogburn was supposed to be out hunting fresh victims. In this apartment Ogburn

and the woman had hatched their little scheme, whereby they were to get rid of Whitacre, keep all the loot, and clear Ogburn of criminal complicity in the affairs of Ogburn & Whitacre.

Ogburn had come into the Continental office and told his little tale of his partner's dishonesty, engaging Bob Teal to shadow him. Then he had told Whitacre that he had received a tip from his friend in Washington that an investigation was about to be made. The two partners planned to leave town on their separate ways the following week. The next night Mae Landis told Whitacre she had seen a man loitering in the neighborhood, apparently watching the building in which they lived. Whitacre — thinking Bob a Post Office inspector — had gone completely to pieces, and it had taken the combined efforts of the woman and his partner — apparently working separately — to keep him from bolting immediately. They persuaded him to stick it out another few days.

On the night of the murder, Ogburn, pretending scepticism of Whitacre's story about being followed, had met Whitacre for the purpose of learning if he really was being shadowed. They had walked the streets in the rain for an hour. Then Ogburn, convinced, had announced his intention of going back and talking to the supposed Post Office inspector, to see if he could be bribed. Whitacre had refused to accompany his partner, but had agreed to wait for him in a dark doorway.

Ogburn had taken Bob Teal over behind the billboards on some pretext, and had murdered him. Then he had hurried back to his partner, cryirig: “My God! He grabbed me and I shot him. We'll have to leave!”

Whitacre, in blind panic, had left San Francisco without stopping for his bags or even notifying Mae Landis. Ogburn was supposed to leave by another route. They were to meet in Oklahoma City ten days later, where Ogburn — after getting the loot out of the Los Angeles banks where he had deposited it under various names — was to give Whitacre his share, and then they were to part for good.

In Sacramento next day Whitacre had read the newspapers, and had understood what had been done to him. He had done all the bookkeeping; all the false entries in Ogburn & Whitacre's books were in his writing. Mae Landis had revealed his former criminal record, and had fastened the ownership of the gun — really Ogburn's — upon him. He was framed completely! He hadn't a chance of clearing himself.

He had known that his story would sound like a far-fetched and flimsy lie; he had a criminal record. For him to have surrendered and told the truth would have been merely to get himself laughed at.

As it turned out, Ogburn went to the gallows, Mae Landis is now serving a fifteen-year sentence, and Whitacre, in return for his testimony and restitution of the loot, was not

prosecuted for his share in the land swindle.