

# The Mental Bloodhound

by Helmar Lewis



“GOOD morning, Professor Wright.”

Nurse Grace Chesley adjusted the Venetian blind so that the morning sun sifted through the shafts and streaked the room with golden sunbeams. Then she looked over to the immaculate white

bed in which lay the figure of a man just awakening.

From the outlines suggested by the coverlet, it was obvious that his slender body had wasted away almost to skeletal proportions. A thin arm rested above the cover; the fingers were like whitened bones. It

could easily have been the body of a dead man for not a muscle moved to reveal life. But when his eyes opened the man seemed vitally alive. Like a sponge they seemed to soak in the beneficent warmth of the sun and revel in its pervasive goodness.

“Morning, nurse.” He strained his eyes to one side to see her, but she stood just beyond his range of vision. He heard the tinkle of a spoon stirring liquid in a glass.

“There’s time for medicine later,” he said, “turn on the radio. Something must have happened by now.”

“Sorry, medicine first.”

“Did you bring the morning paper?”

Grace took the glass to his bedside and slipped one arm professionally under his head to lift it.

“Now drink this.”

He gulped it quickly and then asked again, “Did you bring the morning paper?”

“Yes, but—nothing’s happened yet.”

“Impossible! I don’t believe you. Two weeks without one crime being committed. Are we suddenly living in a paradise? There’d better be a crime soon, nurse, or I’ll die of sheer boredom. Got the paper?”

“Yes,” She held it slantwise so that he could read the items. He glanced quickly over the first page.

“It doesn’t seem possible that the underworld has been serene and innocent for two solid weeks,” he said.

“I guess the only way to keep you happy is for me to go out and rob a bank.”

“You’re not the type at all. You’d murder but you wouldn’t steal.” Professor Wright’s eyes brightened. “Here’s something interesting. There was a convention last night of the American Association of Criminologists.”

“What did you mean when you said I’d murder?” Grace asked.

“Wonder if Hennessey was there.”

“Why did you say I’d murder,

Professor Wright?”

“Your eyebrows are too thick for stealing. You’re the Borgia type.”

“My eyebrows are not thick!”

“You pluck ’em, that’s why.”

THE DOOR opened and Mrs. Gummins, the housekeeper peered in. She was scowling and her upper lip was hidden by the protruding pout of her lower one.

“Morning, Mrs. Gummins,” Professor Wright said. Then he looked up at the nurse. “Mrs. Gummins has a good share of postpituitary, only she’s obviously subthyroid.”

Mrs. Gummins dropped her jaw slightly. “Is ’e out uv ’is ’ead?” she asked.

“No, Mrs. Gummins, I’m quite sane. Just bored, that’s all. No crimes. No criminals to catch. Nothing to do. So you may as well bring my breakfast up.”

“That there feller’s ’ere. That American bobby wi’ the red ’air and the green suit.”

“Hennessey! Thank God! Tell him to come right up. Never mind the breakfast. Hurry, Mrs. Gummins.”

“Shouldn’t ’e ought to ’ave ’is breakfast, nurse?”

“I guess he can wait a little while.”

The woman turned to go. She left the door open and they could hear her mumbling in her Cockney whine as she went to get the visitor, “I can’t for the life o’ me see why that there ’Ennessey don’t stop botherin’ a poor invalid what’s paralyzed from the neck down. Why can’t ’e do ’is own detecative work, the big lummo.”

When Hennessey walked in, happiness welled over the wasted hollows of Professor Wright’s face so that he actually beamed.

“Sit down, Hennessey. Is it murder or just a report on the Convention last night?” the invalid asked eagerly.

“Well, Professor, it’s a little bit of

both.” He lifted a chair by the side of the door and carried it to the bedside. As he passed the nurse, he grinned, “Morning, Miss Chesley.”

“Forget the formalities. The devil with the morning,” the professor snapped peevishly. “Sit down and tell me what’s happened.”

Hennessey pulled a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

“I don’t know if I shoulda bothered you with this one. It’s kinda tough, even for you.”

“Hennessey, give me the details,” the sick man pleaded. “I’ve been lying here in this damned bed for almost two weeks waiting for you to come with another case. What’s happened to the damned criminals. Have you tracked them all down to their lairs?”

“I oughta pretty soon with your help. I don’t know what I’d a done without it the past three years. The truth. Why, they’d think I was off my chump if I said that I hadn’t solved the murders—that it was a guy what hadn’t been outa bed for three years—that it was Professor Ogden Wright who used to be professor of Endo-crin....”

“Hennessey, if I weren’t paralyzed I’d take you...”

“OK. IT’S like this. There was a convention last night at the Palmer House. The American Association of ...”

“Criminologists,” Wright interrupted.

“Yes, I know that. Lester Gould was the main speaker. Very smart man, Gould. You could learn a few things from him. One of the sharpest brains in the country. Well, go on. I want to hear about the murder.”

“It happened at the convention.”

“Good Lord! What a magnificent place for a crime.”

“That’s right.” Hennessey squashed his cigarette butt in an ash tray.

“Who was the victim?”

“Lester Gould.”

Wright looked shocked.

“I’m sorry to hear that. How did it happen? Who did it?”

“Wait a minute, I’m the guy what tells you what happened, but you’re the guy what tells me who done it. Remember?” Hennessey replied.

“All right, go on.”

“I wasn’t at the banquet myself,” Hennessey explained, “but it seems they were just finished eating—the usual lousy creamed chicken, I suppose—and the men were sitting around smoking cigars and talking shop, like you ‘remember how I nabbed “Killer” Cade and that stuff and . . .”

“What happened?” the invalid growled.

“Well, Lester Gould was scheduled to give the main talk of the evening. And you know how he can turn on the fancy gab. Well, this time, it seems he’d arranged to have a lot of slide-pictures shown and he was going to give a spiel about them. So, when the lights were turned out ...”

“Struck in the dark,” the professor whispered.

“Yah, that’s right,” Hennessey continued after the interruption. “He starts in to give this spiel when the pictures were being shown. He talked through a hand microphone and he’d told the engineer to bring some records of horns and guns and stuff like that to make the pictures seem more real. So, when there was a picture of a guy pulling a trigger, why, the engineer puts on a record of a gun shooting off. It gave the whole thing a lot of tone, see?”

“Gould wasn’t shot though, was he.” The professor said this as a statement and not as a question.

“No, you’re right. He wasn’t shot. And that would have been the simplest way to kill him with all those records of shooting going off.”

“Go on.”

“WELL, the talk and the pictures went on for about a half-hour. And it was pretty good from what the fellas said. He did forget his speech once but he picked right up again. Then when the lights go back on, what do you think they find?”

“Tell me!” the invalid snapped, “without asking riddles.”

“You’ll never guess,” Hennessey said, “so I’ll tell you. Slumped on the floor, they found Lester Gould stone-dead. Now figure that one out, Professor! And when they examined him they found his wrist-watch was smashed and had stopped fifteen minutes before the lecture was over and the lights went on. How do you like that one?”

“I do like it,” the professor murmured. “Obviously the murderer was cunning and he had made elaborate plans of what he would do and when. Obviously, also, there was a childish boastfulness in his attitude. He probably thought he could commit the perfect crime.”

“Then you don’t think this thing is foolproof?” Hennessey asked. “You got some ideas already?”

“A few.”

“That’s swell. Because I sure thought you’d never...”

“Had Gould received any warning letters?”

“Well, now I don’t know about that, except maybe the telegram,” Hennessey replied.

“What telegram?”

“At the beginning of the banquet, Gould read off some telegrams. Some were congratulations and good luck and that sort of thing and some were from fellas who couldn’t come. Then, when he starts to read one of them, he stops and then he laughs.”

“What was in the telegram?”

“I brought it along. I don’t think it’s anything more than a gag, but I got a hunch to bring it

along,” Hennessey said. He shifted his huge bulk and dug into his back pocket. He pulled out the telegram, unfolded it and read, haltingly, “PREPARE FOR DEATH, LESTER GOULD. YOU WILL DIE TONIGHT. THE PERFECT CRIME WILL BE COMMITTED AND YOU WILL BE THE VICTIM.”

The invalid’s eyes brightened. He mumbled aloud, as though to himself, “Obviously thymocentric with the possibility of a subparathyroid disorder. The telegram, the desire for the perfect crime, killing him in the dark—they all add up to thymocentric-subparathyroid.”

A MUTED telephone bell interrupted them. The nurse started to answer it, but Hennessey stopped her.

“That must be from the coroner. I told him to call me here when he got done with his autopsy.”

“It was poison,” Wright said. “The coroner will tell you it was death by poison.”

Hennessey lifted the receiver. After a short conversation he hung up. He stood looking at the invalid for a few seconds, shaking his head.

“The coroner said it was death by poison. How do you hit it, Professor? Every time, you hit the answer right on the button.” He lumbered back to his chair and sat down. “Doc Anders said he found sure signs of poison in Gould’s insides. And he also found where it had been given—through a small puncture in the palm of the right hand.”

“More ingenious cunning,” the professor murmured, “and more signs of the thymocentric. What else is there, Hennessey?” he asked.

“That’s all I know. I still think this is going to be a tough case,” the detective said. “How are you going to figure this one out according to your glands and what-nots, Professor Wright?”

The professor didn't answer. He lay quietly with a slight frown on his forehead. Finally, he said:

"I can give you a description of the murderer now, but if you had a picture of the guests at the banquet I could pick him out and save you that much time."

Hennessey shot a startled glance at the nurse. She smiled sympathetically.

"I think Mr. Hennessey has tired you, Professor Wright," she said quietly. "Perhaps if he left now and came back later . . ."

"I'm not at all tired. As a matter of fact I feel exhilarated," the invalid protested.

"Yah, maybe I better come back later," Hennessey agreed. He got up and started for the door.

"Hennessey!" the professor shouted. "Come back here and sit down. You want to get the murderer, don't you?"

"Sure, but . . ."

"The papers all over the country will laugh their editorial heads off if this murder isn't solved immediately."

"I know, but . . ."

"Here is a banquet hall full of criminologists and detectives and a murder is committed and nobody knows who did it. You're going to look like a bunch of fools."

"That's right," Hennessey looked at the sick man for a moment and then he said, "but I'll look like the prize fool if you pick out a guy from his picture and say he done the murder. And suppose he hasn't done it."

"I haven't been wrong yet, have I?" Professor Wright queried.

"No."

"Well, then stop acting as though I had lost my mind. Sit down here and listen to me."

O. K." Hennessey went back to his chair and sat down gingerly. "I can get you a picture of the fellas at the banquet. The papers sent a couple of men down to take photographs . . ."

"Get me a picture and I'll give you the

murderer," the invalid promised.

"But how do you know the murderer'll be on the picture?"

"I've told you already. Because he's a thymocentric," Wright explained. Hennessey didn't reply and the professor continued, "get me a picture and have it blown up considerably. Do you understand?"

"O. K." the detective replied. "When do you want it?"

"As soon as possible if you want to catch your man alive. He's the type that's given to suicide. By the way," Wright asked, "you're holding all these men, aren't you?"

"Of course," Hennessey replied. "We've got everyone who was at the banquet locked up in a bunch of hotel rooms with some of my best men standing guard."

"Fine."

"Well, I'll get going then," Hennessey said. He got up. "Do you think maybe we can get the murderer by the afternoon edition?"

"That depends on when you get the picture to me," the invalid replied.

"O.K. I'm leaving right now." Hennessey lumbered to the door, turned back once to say good-bye to nurse Chesley and left.

THE nurse put her thumb on the professor's wrist pulse.

"Would you like your breakfast, now?" she asked.

"No. Couldn't eat a thing."

"But you should. How about a glass of milk?"

"No. I'm too excited."

"You feel all right?"

"Fine! That's an interesting case, isn't it? Too bad it had to be Gould, though. He was a brilliant criminologist."

"How do you do it, Professor Wright?"

"Do what?"

"Solve all these cases? You've been bed-ridden for three years. You're never at the

scene of the crime. You never see the victim or the suspects and yet, you always can figure out who did it. And you told Mr. Hennessey that you could give him a description of the murderer.”

“I can,” Wright replied. “Now let’s review the important facts. First, the murder was committed in the dark. Second, it was not an obvious murder, By that I mean neither a gun nor a knife was used. Instead, the murder was done by poisoning.”

“But,” the nurse interrupted, “the coroner said the poison was administered by a pin prick in the palm of Gould’s right hand. Wouldn’t it have been possible for the murderer to have wounded Gould’s hand before and not during the banquet?”

“Yes, it would have been possible, but not at all probable. You see, the thymocentric-subparathyroid criminal type prefers to be on the spot when the deed is done. He likes the murder to be sensational. And if Gould’s hand had been pricked with poison before the banquet he would have died with the lights on. And this type of murderer usually strikes in the dark. As a matter of fact, the poison needle was probably in the handle of the microphone.”

“But, Professor Wright,” nurse Chesley said, “how could Mr. Gould have died before he finished his speech when everyone heard him talking? Mr. Hennessey said that his watch was smashed when they found him and it had stopped fifteen minutes before he actually finished his lecture.”

“That’s right,” the invalid agreed. He closed his eyes wearily. The effort of talking at length had obviously sapped his nurtured strength.

AFTER a few moment’s rest he continued:

“Do you remember that Hennessey said Gould had forgotten his speech at one point and then remembered and went on?”

“Yes.”

“Gould had remarkable memory, so it’s unlikely he would have forgotten his lecture. No,” Wright explained, “it was at that moment that he was killed.”

“But the rest of the speech?”

“As I mentioned before, nurse, the thymocentric-subparathyroid is cunning. He is a man who would have studied his victim. He would very probably be able to imitate his voice and speech habits. And since a microphone often distorts a voice, there is no reason why anyone would suspect. But, to get back to the description.”

“Would you rather rest a while?”

“No, I like to formulate my ideas.”

“Then let me freshen your pillow.”

Nurse Chesley raised the invalid’s head gently and slid the pillow from under it. She shook it down and then replaced it.

“The man who murdered Lester Gould,” Wright said quietly, “is of medium build. He is slightly bald and may be wearing a toupee. But his own hair is very fine. Possibly blonde.”

“Wouldn’t that description fit a number of people?” Nurse Chesley asked.

The professor continued, ignoring the interruption.

“Most positively, he will have a receding chin. His face will not be uniformly featured. That is, one side will be slightly larger than the other and his nose will be turned either to the right or to the left.” He paused to gather strength to continue. Nurse Chesley waited eagerly for him to resume the description of the criminal.

“Particularly,” the invalid went on, “the man will have very bad teeth. Many of them will be decayed and the upper front teeth, especially, will be misshapen and should have wide spaces between them. And this is most important: The man will have a small rat-like mouth and the expression on his face will be one of constant fear.”

The professor closed his eyes and fell

asleep from the emotional strain and excitement. Nurse Chesley sat for a few moments by his bed-side and then went to the window. She stood there waiting for Hennessey and the picture of the guests at the banquet. In a short while she saw him waddling quickly toward the house with a long cylindrical package under his arm. She looked back at the sick man who was still asleep.

THE door-bell rang sharply. After a few moments it rang again, long and loud. The invalid's eyelids fluttered but did not open. Then Nurse Chesley heard Mrs. Gummins shuffling to the door. Hennessey came puffing into the room.

"Here it is. Got it right here." When he saw the professor lying quietly in bed he stopped.

"He ain't dead, is he?" Hennessey asked.

"No. He's only sleeping," the nurse replied. "All this excitement over-tired him."

"This is one helluva time to go to sleep," Hennessey said bitterly. "Here I break my neck getting this blown-up picture so's he can identify the criminal and he goes to sleep. Wake him up."

"Sssh!" the nurse admonished. "Not so loud."

"Ssshhh!" came from the sick-bed. "Who's making such a racket?"

"It's me, Professor. It's Hennessey! I got the picture." Hennessey hurried to the invalid's side and began tearing the wrapping off the package. Professor Wright opened his eyes and smiled.

"Don't be nervous, Hennessey."

"I can't help it."

"I'll pick your man for you."

"O.K. Here's the picture." Hennessey held it up for the professor's scrutiny.

Wright examined each face in the photograph silently. Because^ of the number

of people present and because of his thoroughness more than half an hour elapsed. Then, when the detective began to lose all hope of finding the murderer's picture in the group, he saw the professor's eyes light up.

"Got him?" he demanded excitedly.

"Yes," Professor Wright replied.

"Which one? Show me?"

"At the lower right hand corner of the photograph," the professor said, "immediately in front of the entire group but over to the extreme right."

THE detective indicated what he thought to be the suspect with his index finger.

"That one?"

"No! no! three faces to the right!"

The detective shifted his fat finger.

"This one here?"

"Yes," the professor said. "That one there."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"He's the type you were talking about, huh?"

"The thymocentric-subparathyroid. Exactly. Notice the receding chin. Notice also the toupee, which indicates that he is bald, or partially bald," the invalid explained. "Observe in the small, open mouth that the man's teeth are set wide apart. Who is he? Why is he standing near the electrical equipment? Is he the electrician, the man in charge of the loudspeaker equipment?"

The detective, imbued with the invalid's enthusiasm, bent eagerly over the photograph. His forehead wrinkled in puzzlement for a moment. Then a gleam of knowledge ironed out the wrinkles.

"Yah, I remember him now," he boomed out. "He's the guy in charge of the electrical stuff. Name's Joe Foley, I think. Runs a recording studio or something."

"Fine! That fits in perfectly," the professor exclaimed. "You still have him detained?"

“Sure.”

“Then you’d better arrest him in a hurry before he kills himself.”

“O. K. I’ll go right down.” Hennessey grabbed the picture and started for the door. Then he stopped quickly and turned back. “Hey, wait a minute. I can’t just walk in there and say, ‘You killed Lester Gould.’ I gotta have proof. I gotta be able to say, ‘You killed Lester Gould because of this and this and this.’ See?”

“But it will be wasting time. Foley might be committing suicide this very minute.”

“Wait a minute, Professor,” Hennessey said. “I’ll call one of my boys and tell him to keep a good watch on Foley. How’s that? Then I’ll stay here while you give me the dope. O. K.?”

“Excellent.”

HENNESSEY called the hotel and left his orders. He had to argue a while because the police lieutenant at the other end couldn’t see any reason for detaining Foley, of all people. But, Hennessey finally got him to agree. When he had hung up, he sat by the invalid’s bed and said, impatiently:

“All right, what’s the evidence?”

“I’m fairly sure,” the professor began, “that careful examination of the hand microphone will show a small hole. This hole will only be large enough for a small needle—the poison needle.”

“O. K.” Hennessey said, “but what about Gould’s dying before he finished talking? A guy can’t lecture when he’s dead, can he?”

“I had thought that the murderer imitated Gould’s voice. The microphone would have helped the deceit because it often distorts a voice.”

“Yah, that’s right,” Hennessey agreed,

“But, you tell me that Foley is in the recording business. Well, then, obviously, he

had Gould make a record of his speech so that Gould could hear how it would sound on the pretense of adjusting the volume. Then Foley kept the record and when Gould dropped dead, Foley simply put the record on his machine and no one was wiser.”

“That must have been when everyone thought he had forgotten his speech.”

“You see, Hennessey, the thymus type of criminal is very clever—very ingenious,” the professor started to explain.

“But, why should he want to kill Gould?” Hennessey interrupted.

“That I can’t tell you. It was revenge, I’m sure, but why or what—well, you’ll have to find that out for yourself.”

Hennessey got up and went to the telephone. He dialed a number and stood nervously making clicking noises with his tongue until the party at the other end answered.

“Hello,” he said, “gimme Brooks.” There was another short wait and then, “Hello, Brooks. Hennessey talking. Look through the files and see if we got anything on a Joe Foley. Runs a recording studio. Yah. Better check his whole family. O. K.? Swell. Call me at Professor Ogden Wright’s home. What do you mean am I working on the murder? I got it solved. Sure. Get to work on the Foley stuff and call me back.”

HENNESSEY pulled a fresh package of cigarettes from his pocket and broke the seal. His face looked more relaxed.

“Looks like we’re maybe on the right track, huh?” He looked at nurse Chesley and smiled.

“You got a smart patient, there,” he said.

“He described Foley exactly,” she replied.

“Yeh?”

“When you were out getting the picture, he told me how the murderer would

look,” the nurse explained, “and he was right.”

Professor Wright beamed. Hennessey walked over to him and leaned against the bed.

“Now, tell me,” he said confidentially, “how’d you do it this time?”

“Endocrinology again,” Professor Wright explained. “It’s very simple. The glandular indications in this case are fairly obvious. This Foley is a perfect specimen of the thymocentric—that’s a person with an overfunctioning thymus gland. Ordinarily, this thymus gland, which is situated near the heart, stops functioning when a person is about 17 years old. But, if it continues to function, it produces a criminal who retains certain childish faults—often dangerous faults. The sending of the telegram was impertinent and childish. Having himself photographed with leading criminologists, and devising such an infantile murder device as a poison needle! That’s the sort of thing a child remembers from reading penny-thriller detective stories. Do you follow me?”

“Well, yeah, that last part I get,” Hennessey said slowly, “but I never could understand all that gab about how the ductless glands secrete juices that make a guy either a saint or a sinner. I know a lot about a lot of things, but I still don’t know nothing about them ductless glands. And you been giving me the dope on them for three years now.” He paused to take a long drag on his cigarette and then he said, “On the level, professor, can you really figure this stuff out by glands?”

“There is no other way.”

“Well, you been doing all right with it.”

“MOST criminals are usually hyphenated,” Wright continued, “that is, they have combinations of endocrine gland disturbances. This electrician, Foley, was also a subparathyroid—that is, his parathyroid gland was not functioning as it should and secreted an

insufficiency of parathyroid fluid.”

“But how could you tell he was a subpara . . . whatever you said,” Hennessey insisted.

“You said the murder was committed in the dark. That is typical of the subparathyroid.”

“O. K. if you say so, but how could you tell from that what the guy looked like?”

“There are certain physical conditions which occur when the parathyroid is not functioning as it should. Foley’s bad teeth, and especially the fact they were widely spaced, plus the lopsided appearance of his face, plus his pinched expression—all these things are present in a subparathyroid murderer.”

Nurse Chesley moved closer to the foot of the bed.

“You mentioned, Professor Wright,” she said, “that the man would be bald. Is that part of a subparathyroid deficiency, too?”

“No, that belongs to the thymocentric. But Foley is a combination, you see.”

There was a faint whirr of the telephone bell and nurse Chesley answered it. She handed the phone to Hennessey. After listening for about five minutes, he hung up and turned to the professor.

“You win again. That was Brooks. He didn’t have nothing on Foley himself, but it seems Foley’s brother killed a Gold-coast millionaire in a hold-up about two years ago and Lester Gould was hired to find him. So, of course he did and Foley’s brother was burned in the chair.”

“Then the motive was revenge,” Wright said.

“Guess it must be.” Hennessey grinned. He pulled a cigarette from his pack. “Well, I better be getting along before Foley confesses and someone else gets the credit.”

“He won’t confess orally,” the invalid assured him. “Thymocentric-subparathyroids seldom do. They aren’t the type, you know. But he’ll have written a diary or he’ll write a

long dissertation on the perfect crime.”

“Swell. Then I’ll have time for a coke.” Hennessey lumbered out puffing vigorously at the cigarette. The invalid closed

his eyes and here was a faint smile of happiness about his lips.

“I’ll have my medicine now, nurse Chesley,” he said.