

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROY WALTERS
SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Amidst numerous difficulties the servants deserted. An Miss Innes locked up for the night. She was attacked by a dark figure on the veranda. She passed a terrible night, which was filled with agonizing thoughts. In the morning Miss Innes found a strange link cuff button in a clothes hamper. Gertrude and Halsey arrived with Jack Bailey. The house was attacked by a revolver shot. A strange man was found shot to death in the hall. It proved to be the body of Arnold Armstrong, whose banker father owned the country home. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver on the lawn. He and Jack Bailey had disappeared. The link cuff button mysteriously disappeared. Detective Jamieson and the coroner arrived. Gertrude revealed that she was engaged to Jack Bailey, with whom she had talked in the billiard room a few moments before the murder. Jamieson told Miss Innes that she was hiding evidence from him. He imprisoned the intruder in an empty room. The prisoner escaped down a laundry chute. It developed that the intruder was probably a woman. Gertrude was suspected for the intruder left a print of a bare foot. Gertrude returned home with her right ankle sprained. A negro found the other half of what proved to be Jack Bailey's cuff button. Halsey suddenly reappeared. He said he and Bailey had left because they had received a telegram. Gertrude said that she had given Bailey an unloaded revolver, fearing to give him Halsey's loaded weapon. Cashier Bailey of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested, charged with embezzlement. Halsey said Armstrong had wrecked his own bank, and was able to clear Bailey. A telegram contained news that Paul Armstrong was dead. Halsey trapped Mrs. Watson, the housekeeper, while she was stealing from the house. At the lodge Miss Innes and Halsey found Halsey's fiancée, Louise Armstrong, sister of the dead man. She was believed to be in California. The lodge keeper told Miss Innes that Louise and Arnold had had a long talk the night of the murder. Louise was prostrated.

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

The gardener mentioned by Halsey came out about two o'clock in the afternoon, and walked up from the station. I was favorably impressed by him. His references were good—he had been employed by the Brays' until they went to Europe, and he looked young and vigorous. He asked for one assistant, and I was glad enough to get off so easily. He was a pleasant-faced young fellow, with black hair and blue eyes, and his name was Alexander Graham. I have been particular about Alex, because, as I said before, he played an important part later.

That afternoon I had a new insight into the character of the dead banker. I had my first conversation with Louise. She sent for me, and against my better judgment I went.

She held out her hand and I took it between both of mine.

"What can I say to you, Miss Innes?" she said slowly. "To have come like this—"

"I thought she was going to break down, but she did not."

"You are not to think of anything but of getting well," I said, patting her hand. "When you are better, I am going to scold you for not coming here at once. This is your home, my dear, and of all people in the world, Halsey's old aunt ought to make you welcome."

She smiled a little, sadly, I thought. "I ought not to see Halsey," she said. "Miss Innes, there are a great many things you will never understand, I am afraid. I am an impostor on your sympathy, because I—I stay here and let you lavish care on me, and all the time I know you are going to despise me."

"Nonsense!" I said briskly. "Why, what would Halsey do to me if I even ventured such a thing? He is so big and masterful that if I dared to be anything but rapturous over you, he would throw me out of a window. Indeed, he would be quite capable of it."

She seemed scarcely to hear my facetious tone. She had eloquent brown eyes—the fuses are fair, and prone to a grayish-green optic that is better for use than appearance—and they seemed now to be clouded with trouble.

"Poor Halsey!" she said softly. "Miss Innes, I cannot marry him, and I am afraid to tell him. I am a coward—a coward!"

I sat beside the bed and stared at her. She was too ill to argue with, and, besides, sick people take queer fancies.

"We will talk about that when you are stronger," I said gently.

"But there are some things I must tell you," she insisted. "You must wonder how I came here, and why I stayed hidden at the lodge. Dear old



"I Am Very Sorry You Have Made This Decision," He Said.

Thomas has been almost crazy, Miss Innes. I did not know that Sunnyside was rented. I knew my mother wished to rent it, without telling my step-father, but the news must have reached her after I left. When I started east, I had only one idea—to be alone with my thoughts for a time, to bury myself here. Then, I—must have taken a cold on the train."

"You came east in clothing suitable for California," I said, "and like all young girls nowadays, I don't suppose you wear flannels." But she was not listening.

"Miss Innes," she said, "has my stepbrother Arnold gone away?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, startled. But Louise was literal.

"He didn't come back that night," she said, "and it was so important that I should see him."

"I believe he has gone away," I replied uncertainly. "Isn't it something that we could attend to instead?"

But she shook her head. "I must do it myself," she said dully.

Halsey came to the door at that moment and I could hear him coaxing Liddy for admission to the sick room.

"Shall I bring him in?" I asked Louise, uncertain what to do. The girl seemed to shrink back among her pillows at the sound of his voice. I was vaguely irritated with her; there are few young fellows like Halsey—straightforward, honest, and willing to sacrifice everything for the one woman. I knew one once, more than 20 years ago, who was like that; he died a long time ago. And sometimes I take out his picture, with its cane and its queer silk hat, and look at it. But of late years it has grown too painful; he is always a boy—and I am an old woman. I would not bring him back if I could.

Perhaps it was some such memory that made me call out sharply.

"Come in, Halsey." And then I took my sewing and went into the bonfire beyond, to play propriety. I did not try to hear what they said, but every word came through the open door with curious distinctness. Halsey had evidently gone over to the bed and I suppose he kissed her. There was silence for a moment, as if words were superfluous things.

"I have been almost wild, sweetheart," Halsey's voice. "Why didn't you trust me, and send for me before?"

"It was because I couldn't trust myself," she said in a low tone. "I am too weak to struggle today; oh, Halsey, how I have wanted to see you!"

There was something I did not hear, then Halsey again.

"We could go away," he was saying. "What does it matter about any one in the world but just the two of us? To be always together, like this, hand in hand; Louise—don't tell me it isn't going to be. I won't believe you."

"You don't know; you don't know," Louise repeated dully. "Halsey, I care—you know that—but not enough to marry you."

"That is not true, Louise," she said sternly. "You cannot look at me with your honest eyes and say that."

"I cannot marry you," she repeated miserably. "It's bad enough, isn't it? Don't make it worse. Some day, before long, you will be glad."

"Then it is because you have never loved me." There were depths of hurt pride in his voice. "You saw how much I loved you, and you let me think you cared—for a while. No—that isn't like you, Louise. There is something you haven't told me. Is it—because there is some one else?"

"Yes," almost inaudibly.

"Louise! Oh, I don't believe it."

"It is true," she said sadly. "Halsey, you must not try to see me again. As soon as I can, I am going away from here—where you are all so much kind-

er than I deserve. And whatever you hear about me, try to think as well of me as you can. I am going to marry—another man. How you must hate me—hate me!"

I could hear Halsey cross the room to the window. Then, after a pause, he went back to her again. I could hardly sit still; I wanted to go in and give her good shaking.

"Then it's all over," he was saying with a long breath. "The plans we made together, the hopes, the—all of it—over! Well, I'll not be a baby, and I'll give you up the minute you say 'I don't love you and I do love—some one else!'"

"I can not say that," she breathed, "but, very soon, I shall marry—the other man."

I could hear Halsey's low triumphant laugh.

"I defy him," he said. "Sweetheart, as long as you care for me, I am not afraid."

The wind slammed the door between the two rooms just then, and I could hear nothing more, although I moved my chair quite close. After a discreet interval, I went into the other room and found Louise alone. She was staring with sad eyes at the cherub painted on the ceiling over the bed, and because she looked tired I did not disturb her.

CHAPTER XIV.

An Egg-Nog and a Telegram.

We had discovered Louise at the lodge Tuesday night. It was Wednesday I had my interview with her. Thursday and Friday were uneventful, save as they marked improvement in our patient. Gertrude spent almost all the time with her, and the two had grown to be great friends. But certain things hung over me constantly; the coroner's inquest on the death of Arnold Armstrong, to be held Saturday, and the arrival of Mrs. Armstrong and young Dr. Walker, bringing the body of the dead president of the Traders' bank. We had not told Louise of either death.

Then, too, I was anxious about the children. With their mother's inheritance swept away in the wreck of the bank, and with their love affairs in a disastrous condition, things could scarcely be worse. Added to that, the cook and Liddy had a flare up over the proper way to make beef-tea for Louise, and, of course, the cook left.

Mrs. Watson had been glad enough, I think, to turn Louise over to our care, and Thomas went upstairs night and morning to greet his young mistress from the doorway. Poor Thomas! He had the faculty—found still in some old negroes, who cling to the traditions of slavery days—of making his employer's interest his. It was always "we" with Thomas. I miss him sorely; pipe-smoking, obsequious, not over reliable, kindly old man!

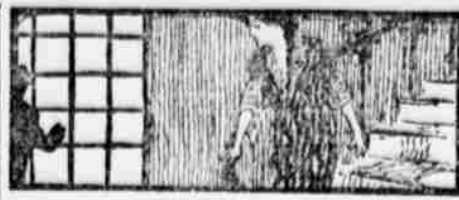
On Thursday Mr. Harton, the Armstrongs' legal adviser, called up from town. He had been advised, he said, that Mrs. Armstrong was coming east with her husband's body and would arrive Monday. He came with some hesitation, at last, to the fact that he had been further instructed to ask me to relinquish my lease on Sunnyside, as it was Mrs. Armstrong's desire to come directly there.

I was aghast.

"Here!" I said. "Surely you are mistaken, Mr. Harton. I should think, after what happened here only a few days ago, she would never wish to come back."

"Nevertheless," he replied, "she is most anxious to come. This is what she says: 'Use every possible means to have Sunnyside vacated. Must go there at once.'"

"Mr. Harton," I said testily, "I am not going to do anything of the kind.



I and mine have suffered enough at the hands of this family. I rented the house at an exorbitant figure and I have moved out here for the summer. My city home is dismantled and in the hands of decorators. I have been here one week, during which I have had not a single night of uninterrupted sleep, and I intend to stay until I have recuperated. Moreover, if Mr. Armstrong died insolvent, as I believe was the case, his widow ought to be glad to be rid of so expensive a piece of property."

The lawyer cleared his throat.

"I am very sorry you have made this decision," he said. "Miss Innes, Mrs. Fitzhugh tells me Louise Armstrong is with you."

"She is."

"Has she been informed of this—double bereavement?"

"Not yet," I said. "She has been very ill; perhaps to-night she can be told."

"It is very sad; very sad," he said. "I have a telegram for her, Miss Innes. Shall I send it out?"

"Better open it and read it to me," I suggested. "If it is important, that will save time."

There was a pause while Mr. Harton opened the telegram. Then he read it slowly, judicially.

"Watch for Nina Carrington, Home Monday, Signed P. L. W."

"Hum!" I said. "Watch for Nina Carrington, Home Monday." Very well, Mr. Harton, I will tell her, but she is not in condition to watch for any one."

"Well, Miss Innes, if you decide to—er—relinquish the lease, let me know," the lawyer said.

"I shall not relinquish it," I replied, and I imagined his irritation from the way he hung up the receiver.

I wrote the telegram down word for word, afraid to trust my memory, and decided to ask Dr. Stewart how soon Louise might be told the truth. The closing of the Traders' bank I considered unnecessary for her to know, but the death of her stepfather and stepbrother must be broken to her soon, or she might hear it in some unexpected and shocking manner.

Dr. Stewart came about four o'clock, bringing his leather satchel into the house with a great deal of care, and opening it at the foot of the stairs to show me a dozen big yellow eggs nesting among the bottles.

"Real eggs," he said proudly. "None of your anemic store eggs, but the real thing—some of them still warm. Peel them! Egg-nog for Miss Louise!"

He was beaming with satisfaction, and before he left, he insisted on going back to the pantry and making an egg-nog with his own hands. Somehow, all the time he was doing it, I had a vision of Dr. Willoughby, my nerve specialist in the city, trying to make an egg-nog. I wondered if he ever prescribed anything so plebeian—and so delicious. And while Dr. Stewart whisked the eggs he talked.

"I said to Mrs. Stewart," he confided, "a little red in the face from the exertion, after I went home the other day, that you would think me an old gossip, for saying what I did about Walker and Miss Louise."

"Nothing of the sort," I protested.

"The fact is," he went on, evidently justifying himself, "I got that piece of information just as we get a lot of things, through the kitchen end of the house. Young Walker's chauffeur—Walker's more fashionable than I am, and he goes around the country in a Stanhope car—well, his chauffeur comes to see our servant girl, and he told her the whole thing. I thought it was probable, because Walker spent a lot of time up here last summer, when the family was here, and besides, Riggs, that's Walker's man, had a very pat little story about the doctor's building a house on this property, just at the foot of the hill. The sugar, please."

The egg-nog was finished. Drop by drop the liquor had cooked the egg, and now, with a final whisk, a last toss in the shaker, it was ready, a symphony in gold and white. The doctor sniffed it.

"Real eggs, real milk and a touch of real Kentucky whisky," he said.

He insisted on carrying it up himself, but at the foot of the stairs he paused.

"Riggs said the plans were drawn for the house," he said, harking back to the old subject. "Drawn by Huston in town. So I naturally believed him."

When the doctor came down, I was ready with a question.

"Doctor," I asked, "is there any one in the neighborhood named Carrington?"

"Carrington?" He wrinkled his forehead. "Carrington? No, I don't remember any such family. There used to be Covingtons down the creek."

"The name was Carrington," I said, and the subject lapsed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Woman a Rural Carrier. Mrs. Carrie Doherty King, of Crystal Springs, Miss., is the only woman mail carrier in her state. She delivers mail on a rural route, making a circuit of about 25 miles a day. In her girlhood she won many trophies for her horsemanship, an accomplishment that is now of great service to her.

WAYS OF SERVING POTATO

Recipes for a Week's Daily Variation of the Vegetable for Those Who Have It Habitually.

For the household which demands its "daily potato" here is a suggestion and a recipe for a daily variation of the vegetable:

Sunday—Mashed potatoes, peel, thin, steam, place in a pan and mash. Add milk, butter and salt, and beat like a cake batter, the longer the better, till they are nice and light. This steaming and heating will be a great improvement.

Monday—Bake potatoes in their jackets. If any are left over they may be warmed; do not peel them till cold, and then slice.

Tuesday—Peel and bake them with roast beef.

Wednesday—The potatoes are sliced thin as for frying and allowed to remain in cold water half an hour. The slices are then put in a pudding dish with salt and pepper and some milk, about one-half pint; put into an oven and bake for an hour.

Thursday—Peel, steam and serve whole.

Friday—Potatoes a la pancake. Peel, cut in thin slices, lengthwise, sprinkle with pepper and salt and fry in butter or beef dripping, turning like griddle cakes.

Saturday—Potatoes boiled in their jackets.

How She Conciliated Them.

Filmer—How did it happen that these five men who were so angry with the woman in the nickelodeon for not taking off her hat became so friendly with her afterward?

Screeners—It was raining like fury when the show was over and she invited them to take shelter with her under her hat.

Women in Love.

"Women in love are generally troublesome and persecuting." Such is the reported opinion of M. Emile Faquet. And if a French critic does not understand the subject, of whom shall we seek understanding?"

His Big Bill.

Guest—How long is this lease of your hotel to run?

Hotel Clerk—What lease?

Guest—The one I just gave you the money for.

Otherwise Hopeless.

"My daughter's voice is to be tried today."

"Have you fixed the jury?"—Cleveland Leader.

Dr. Pierce's Peppets, small, easy-to-take, candy, regulate and invigorate stomach, liver and bowels and cure constipation.

Man cannot be happy when idle, unless resting from previous labor.

Lewis' Single Binder cigar. Original Tin Foil Smoker Package, 5c straight.

Some men carry a sandbag because they are too proud to beg.

Nebraska Directory

JOHN DEERE PLOWS

Are the Best. Ask your local dealer or JOHN DEERE PLOW CO., Omaha, Neb.

WELDING (AUTO GENOUS) By

This process all broken parts of machinery made good as new. Welds cast iron, cast steel, aluminum, copper, brass or any other metal. Expert automobile repairing. BERTSCHY MOTOR CO., Council Bluffs.

AUTOMOBILE TIRES

The Repairs and Tire Supplies of highest quality. CENTRAL TIRE & RUBBER CO. One Biller, President.

M. Spiesberger & Son Co.

Wholesale Millinery The Best in the West OMAHA, NEB.

Nebraska School of Business

The best in all Commercial Courses. Free catalogue explains all. Address W. M. BRYANT, President, No. 11 Hall Building, Lincoln, Neb.

HERBERT E. GOOCH CO.

BROKERS AND DEALERS Grain, Provisions, Stocks, Cotton Main Office, 204-205 Fraternity Bldg. Lincoln, Nebraska. Bell Phone 5123. Auto Phone 2559. Largest House in State.

Beatrice Creamery Co.

Pays the highest price for

CREAM

LINCOLN SANITARIUM

The only Sanitarium in the state using Natural Mineral Water Baths—Unsurpassed in the treatment of Acute and Chronic RHEUMATISM. Moderate Charges. Address: DR. O. W. EVERETT, 1414th M. Sts.

YORK COLLEGE

YORK, NEBRASKA College, Academy, Normal, Pharmacy, Business, Music, Oratory and Art. We issue state certificates. Best Advantages. Lowest Rates. Year opens September 12. Ask for Catalogue. W. M. E. SCHELL, President

Gall Cure

Horse Collars

Are made over Curled Hair Pads and will not grill the horse. Write us for free sample of the Pad. Give the name of your harness dealer. Sold by best dealers everywhere. HARPAM BROS. CO., Lincoln, Neb.

STACK COVERS

ALL SIZES OMAHA TENT & AWNING CO.

Get the best. Your dealer can supply you with our brand. Your loss of hay will more than pay.

OMAHA TENT & AWNING CO. N. W. Cor. 11th & Harney Sts. Omaha, Neb.

The Wretchedness of Constipation

Can quickly be overcome by CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS.

Purely vegetable—act surely and gently on the liver. Cure Bilelessness, Headache, Dizziness, and Indigestion. They do their duty. Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature