

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROY WILKINSON
SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunny-side. Amidst numerous difficulties the servants deserted. As Miss Innes looked up for the night she was startled by a dark figure on the terrace. She opened the door and a man in a dark suit and a white scarf entered. He was dressed in a manner which was filled with unseemly suggestiveness. Miss Innes found a strange link cuff button in a clothes hamper. Gertrude and Halsey arrived with Jack Bailey. The house was searched 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 father owned the country house. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver in the hall. 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.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

"The quarrel, I believe," he persisted, "was about Mr. Armstrong's conduct to you, Miss Gertrude. He had been paying you unwelcome attentions."

And I had never seen the man! When she nodded a "yes" I saw the tremendous possibilities involved. If this detective could prove that Gertrude feared and disliked the murdered man, and that Mr. Armstrong had been annoying and possibly pursuing her with hateful attentions, all that added to Gertrude's confession of her presence in the billiard room at the time of the crime, looked strange, to say the least. The prominence of the family assured a strenuous effort to find the murderer, and if we had nothing worse to look forward to, we were sure of a distasteful publicity.

Mr. Jamieson shut his notebook with a snap and thanked us. "I have an idea," he said, apropos of nothing at all, "that at any rate the ghost is laid here. Whatever the rappings have been—and the colored man says they began when the family went west three months ago—they are likely to stop now."

Which shows how much he knew about it. The ghost was not laid; with the murder of Arnold Armstrong he, or it, only seemed to take on fresh vigor.

Mr. Jamieson left then, and when Gertrude had gone upstairs, as she did at once, I sat and thought over what I had just heard. Her engagement, once so engrossing a matter, paled now beside the significance of her story. If Halsey and Jack Bailey had left before the crime, how came Halsey's revolver in the tulip bed? What was the mysterious cause of her sudden flight? What had Gertrude left in the billiard room? What was the significance of the cuff-link and where was it?

CHAPTER VI.

In the East Corridor.
When the detective left he enjoined absolute secrecy on everybody in the household. The Greenwood club promised the same thing, and as there are no Sunday afternoon papers, the murder was not publicly known until Monday. The coroner himself notified the Armstrong family lawyer, and early in the afternoon he came out. I had not seen Mr. Jamieson since morning, but I knew he had been interrogating the servants. Gertrude was locked in her room with a headache, and I had hunches alone.

Mr. Harton, the lawyer, was a little thin man, and he looked as if he did not relish his business that day. "This is very unfortunate, Miss Innes," he said, after we had shaken hands. "Most unfortunate—and mysterious. With the father and mother in the west, I find everything revolves on me; and, as you can understand, it is an unpleasant duty."

"No doubt," I said absently. "Mr. Harton, I am going to ask you some questions, and I hope you will answer them. I feel that I am entitled to some knowledge, because I and my family are just now in a most ambiguous position."

"I don't know whether he understood me or not; he took off his glasses and wiped them."

"I shall be very happy," he said with old-fashioned courtesy.

"Thank you, Mr. Harton, did Mr. Arnold Armstrong know that Sunny-side had been rented?"

"I think—yes, he did. In fact, I myself told him about it."

"And he knew who the tenants were?"

"Yes."

"He had not been living with the family for some years, I believe?"

"No. Unfortunately, there had been trouble between Arnold and his father. For two years he had lived in town."

"Then it would be unlikely that he came here last night to get possession of anything belonging to him?"

"I should think it hardly possible," he admitted. "To be perfectly frank, Miss Innes, I can not think of any reason whatever for his coming here as he did. He had been staying at the club house across the valley for the last week, Jarvis tells me, but that only explains how he came here, not why. It is a most unfortunate family."

He shook his head despondently, and I felt that this dried-up little man was the repository of much that he had not told me. I gave up trying to elicit any information from him, and we went together to view the body before it was taken to the city. It had been lifted on to the billiard table and a sheet thrown over it; otherwise nothing had been touched. A soft hat lay beside it, and the collar of the dinner-coat was still turned up. The handsome, dissipated face of Arnold Armstrong, purged of its ugly lines, was now only pathetic. As we went in Mrs. Watson appeared at the card-room door.



"The Quarrel, I Believe."

"Come in, Mrs. Watson," the lawyer said. But she shook her head and withdrew; she was the only one in the house who seemed to regret the dead man, and even she seemed rather shocked than sorry.

Before Mr. Harton left, he told me something of the Armstrong family. Paul Armstrong, the father, had been married twice. Arnold was a son by the first marriage. The second Mrs. Armstrong had been a widow, with a child, a little girl. This child, now perhaps 20, was Louise Armstrong, having taken her stepfather's name, and was at present in California with the family.

"They will probably return at once," he concluded, "and part of my errand here to-day is to see if you will relinquish your lease here in their favor."

"We would better wait and see if they wish to come," I said. "It seems unlikely, and my town house is being remedied." At that he let the matter drop, but it came up unpleasantly enough later.

At six o'clock the body was taken away, and at seven-thirty, after an early dinner, Mr. Harton went. Gertrude had not come down, and there was no news of Halsey. Mr. Jamieson had taken a lodging in the village, and I had not seen him since mid-afternoon. It was about nine o'clock, I think, when the bell rang and he was ushered into the living room.

"Sit down," I said grimly. "Have you found a clue that will incriminate me, Mr. Jamieson?"

He had the grace to look uncomfortable. "No," he said. "If you had killed Mr. Armstrong, you would have left no clues. You would have had too much intelligence."

After that we got along better. He was fishing in his pocket, and after a minute he brought out two scraps of paper. "I have been to the club-house," he said, "and among Mr. Armstrong's effects, I found these. One is curious; the other is puzzling."

The first was a sheet of club note-paper on which was written, over and over, the name "Halsey B. Innes." It was Halsey's frowning signature to a dot, but it lacked Halsey's case. The ones toward the bottom of the sheet were much better than the top ones. Mr. Jamieson smiled at my face.

"His old tricks," he said. "That one is merely curious; this one, as I said before, is puzzling."

The second scrap, folded and re-folded into a compass so tiny that the writing had been partly obliterated, was part of a letter—the lower half of a sheet, not typed, but written in a cramped hand.

—by altering the plans for rooms, may be possible. The best way, in my opinion would be to—the plan for—in one of the—rooms—chimney.

That was all.

"Well!" I said, looking up. "There is nothing in that, is there? A man ought to be able to change the plan of his house without becoming an object of suspicion."

"There is little in the paper itself," he admitted; "but why should Arnold Armstrong carry that around, unless it meant something? He never built a house, you may be sure of that. If it is his house, it may mean anything from a secret room."

"To an extra bathroom," I said scornfully. "Haven't you a thumb-print, too?"

"I have," he said with a smile, "and the print of a foot in a tulip bed, and a number of other things. The odd part is, Miss Innes, that the thumb-mark is probably yours and the footprint certainly."

His audacity was the only thing that saved me; his amused smile put me on my mettle, and I ripped out a perfectly good scallop before I answered.

"Why did I step into the tulip bed?" I asked with interest.

"You picked up something," he said good-naturedly, "which you are going to tell me about later."

"Am I, indeed?" I was politely curious. "With this remarkable insight

of yours, I wish you would tell me where I shall find my four-thousand-dollar motorcar."

"I was just coming to that," he said. "You will find it about 30 miles away, at Andrews Station, in a blacksmith shop, where it is being repaired."

I laid down my knitting then and looked at him.

"And Halsey?" I managed to say.

"We are going to exchange information," he said. "I am going to tell you that, when you tell me what you picked up in the tulip bed."

We looked steadily at each other; it was not an unfriendly stare; we were only measuring weapons. Then he smiled a little and got up.

"With your permission," he said, "I am going to examine the card room and the staircase again. You might think over my offer in the meantime."

He went on through the drawing room, and I listened to his footsteps growing gradually fainter. I dropped my pretence at knitting and, leaning back, I thought over the last 48 hours. Here was I, Rachel Innes, spinster, a granddaughter of old John Innes of

revolutionary days, a D. A. R., a Colonial Dame, mixed up with a vulgar and revolting crime, and even attempting to hoodwink the law! Certainly I had left the straight and narrow way.

I was roused by hearing Mr. Jamieson coming rapidly back through the drawing room. He stopped at the door.

"Miss Innes," he said quickly, "will you come with me and light the east corridor? I have fastened somebody in the small room at the head of the card room stairs."

I jumped up at once.

"You mean—the murderer?" I gasped.



"Possibly," he said quietly, as we hurried together up the stairs. "Some one was lurking on the staircase when I went back. I spoke; instead of an answer, whoever it was turned and ran up. I followed—it was dark—but as I turned the corner at the top a figure darted through this door and closed it. The bolt was on my side, and I pushed it forward. It is a closet, I think." We were in the upper hall now. "If you will show me the electric switch, Miss Innes, you would better wait in your own room."

"Trembling as I was, I was determined to see that door opened. I hardly knew what I feared, but so many terrible and inexplicable things had happened that suspense was worse than certainty."

"I am perfectly cool," I said, "and I am going to remain here."

The lights flashed up along that end of the corridor, throwing the doors into relief. At the intersection of the small hallway with the larger, the circular staircase wound its way up, as if it had been an afterthought of the architect. And just around the corner, in the small corridor, was the door Mr. Jamieson had indicated. I was still unfamiliar with the house, and I did not remember the door. My heart was thumping wildly in my ears, but I nodded to him to go ahead. I was perhaps eight or ten feet away—and then he threw the bolt back.

"Come out," he said quietly. There was no response. "Come out," he repeated. Then—I think he had a revolver, but I am not sure—he stepped aside and threw the door open.

From where I stood I could not see beyond the door, but I saw Mr. Jamieson's face change and heard him mutter something, then he bolted down the stairs, three at a time. When my knees had stopped shaking, I moved forward, slowly, nervously, until I had a partial view of what was beyond the door. It seemed at first to be a closet, empty. Then I went close and examined it, to stop with a shudder. Where the floor should have been was black void and darkness, from which came the indescribable damp smell of the cellars.

Mr. Jamieson had locked somebody in the clothes chute. As I leaned over I fancied I heard a groan—or was it the wind?

CHAPTER VII.

A Sprained Ankle.
I was panic-stricken. As I ran along the corridor I was confident that the mysterious intruder and probable murderer had been found, and that he lay dead or dying at the foot of the chute. I got down the staircase somehow, and through the kitchen to the basement stairs. Mr. Jamieson had been before me, and the door stood open. Liddy was standing in the middle of the kitchen holding a frying pan by the handle as a weapon.

"Don't go down there," she yelled, when she saw me moving toward the basement stairs. "Don't you do it, Miss Rachel. That Jamieson's down there now. There's only trouble comes of hunting ghosts; they lead you into bottomless pits and things like that. Oh, Miss Rachel, don't—!" as I tried to get past her.

She was interrupted by Mr. Jamieson's reappearance. He ran up the stairs two at a time, and his face was flushed and furious.

"The whole place is locked," he said angrily. "Where's the laundry key kept?"

"It's kept in the door," Liddy snapped. "That whole end of the cellar is kept locked, so nobody can get at the clothes, and then the key's left in the door, so that unless a thief was as blind as—as some detectives, he could walk right in."

"Liddy," I said sharply, "come down with us and turn on all the lights."

She offered her resignation, as usual, on the spot, but I took her by the arm, and she came along finally. She switched on all the lights and pointed to a door just ahead.

"That's the door," she said sulkily. "The key's in it."

But the key was not in it. Mr. Jamieson shook it, but it was a heavy door, well locked. And then he stooped and began punching around the key-hole with the end of a lead pencil. When he stood up his face was exultant.

"It's locked on the inside," he said in a low tone. "There is somebody in there."

"Lord have mercy!" gasped Liddy, and turned to run.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Women in Postal Service

The distinction of first appointing a woman postmaster does not belong to America, nor is the employment of women in the postal service a new idea. As early as 1548 a woman postmaster was appointed to look after the mails of Braine le Comte, an important town of France. In the trying times of the Thirty Years' War the principal office in the postal service of Europe was held by a woman, Alexandrine de Rue. From 1628 to 1646 she was in charge of the mails of the German empire, the Netherlands, Burgundy and Lorraine. She was known as a master general of the mails in America. Elizabeth Harvey was the first to hold a place

in the postal department. She had charge of the letters in Portsmouth, N. H., in the beginning of the seventeenth century. A half century afterward Lydia Hill was placed in charge of the post office in Salem, Mass.

Where It Goes.

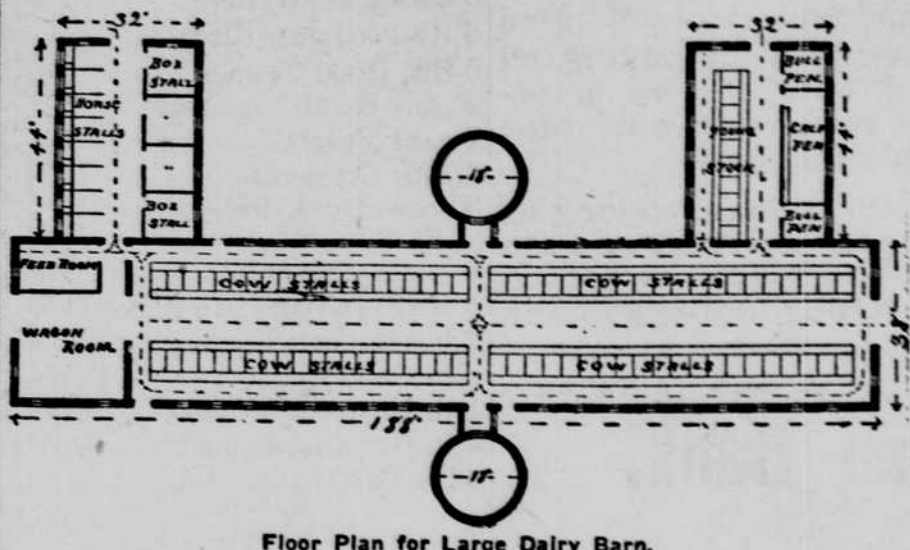
"That man made an immense fortune out of a simple little invention." "Indeed! What did he invent?" "Invent? Nothing, you dub! He was the promoter!"

Trouble.

If people were as resolute in reducing their wants as they are in increasing their demands, the world's worst troubles would quickly disappear.

MODERN COW-BARN TO SHELTER NINETY ANIMALS

Details of Complete Structure and So Designed That Its Capacity May Be Increased or Decreased at Will.



A plan is shown herewith of a modern dairy barn, with capacity for ninety cows. As will be seen by the floor plan, there are stalls for eighty milk cows, ten stalls for dry cows or young stock, two bull stalls, and a large calf pen in one wing of the proposed barn. The opposite wing has eight single stalls, and four double stalls for the horses. Opposite the horse stalls or stable is a large feed room; also a large room for the wagons. The two silos are each 18x34 feet in the clear, and will hold 180 tons of silage each, or sufficient for feeding 100 cows. The barn is very complete, and so designed that its capacity may be increased or decreased, without affecting the general arrangement or the exterior architectural appearance of the barn. The two wings may be built later if desired. Possibly every dairyman would not want the horse barn in connection with the dairy barn, and the main barn can be built larger or smaller, as required.

The barn as designed has a gambrel roof, or as some call it, a double or hip roof. The walls are twelve feet to the eaves, and the lower story eight feet in the clear. The stalls are built of gas pipe, and the pipe supports the ceiling. The cows stand back to back, but this may be reversed if desired. The entire floors, gutters and mangers are formed of cement. The walls and ceilings receive two coats of Portland cement, both exterior and interior. The mangers are arranged to be flooded when watering the stock and the floor has drain traps at convenient points for draining away the wash water with an ordinary one-inch hose. The entire barn, including the walls and ceiling, may be washed down in a short time. The gutters have four-inch drain tile leading to manure pits. The silos are of cement, as is the foundation. The roof is covered with manufactured roofing, and all exposed woodwork receives two or three coats of best paint.

Feed and litter carriers are installed and reach all parts of the barn. The walls have ventilating ducts or shafts between the studding at proper distances, leading to vent stacks in the roof. The studdings are 2x6 inch, and the ventilators are built between same. The stucco, or cement finish for the exterior walls, compares favorably with the wood construction, where sand is not too expensive, and it requires no paint, no repairs, is warm in winter and cool in summer. It will last practically forever.

SUCCESSFUL IN SHEEP RAISING
Beginners Should Study Carefully the Methods and Practices of Men Who Have Profited by Experience.

(By R. R. RUSHING.)
When you start with sheep or prepare to start you can approach some sheepmen with such questions as you desire information upon.

There are a lot of good sheepmen in the country. They are willing to tell you if you ask them what are the "rocks" you would wreck upon. Then is it not good judgment to consult such men?

The first question about environment and condition will be largely settled by the circumstances, financial and otherwise, of the beginner.

We suppose he is an average farmer with perhaps 70 or 80 acres of land and wishes to keep sheep—a small flock—in addition to his other stock. He has very little knowledge of sheep and consequently knows little about breeds and has little idea of what he would like best.

Would it be wise for him to be tempted to foolishly select some breed that his neighbors, who are making a success of sheep, do not have, or perhaps know nothing about, and for that sole reason?

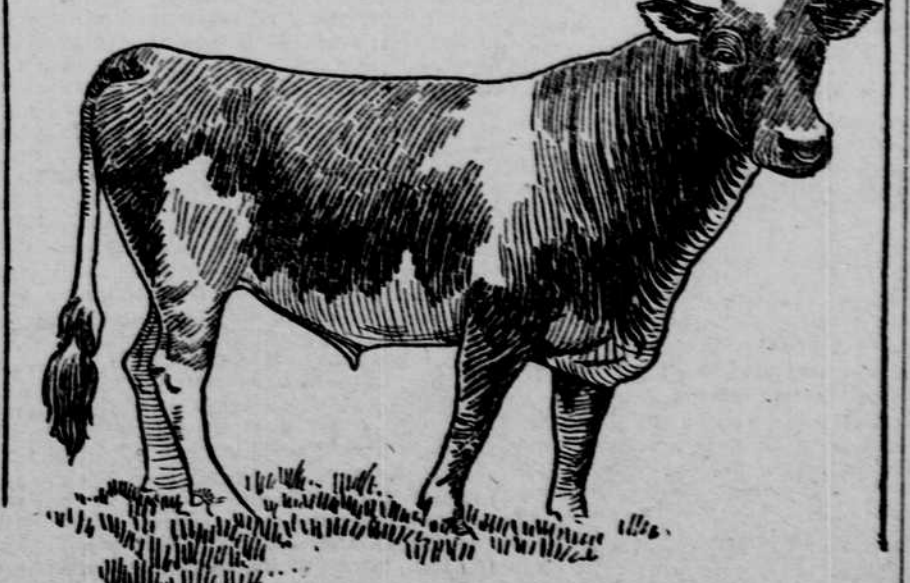
We are safe in following the practice of men who have made a success of the business, with slight changes as conditions would demand. I should buy from one of the neighbors if his sheep were healthy and suited me. If I had very little money I would buy few at first.

A beginner once bought five ewes—and culs at that—paying \$10. They had been bred to a pure bred ram. He put them in a field adjacent to a box stall where he fed them some oats during the winter.

They brought eight lambs. The best lamb he sold to a neighbor for five dollars, half the cost of the flock. Four buck lambs sold to the butcher for \$15. The three ewe lambs were kept to increase the flock.

The next season the eight ewes with 13 lambs following were sold immediately after shearing for \$55. A clear profit of course, counting wool and manure to balance keep of the flock. The great secret of this success was

ATTRACTIVE GUERNSEY BULL



The attractive Guernsey bull here pictured is Milford Lassy 2d's Anchor, owned by Grove farm in Maryland. This young Guernsey bull is deep in the body, of good length, and has Guernsey characteristics, says Orange Judd Farmer. The Grove farm Guernseys attracted much attention when on exhibit during a recent fair season.

GNAT CAUSES PELLAGRA.

Committee on Disease in Europe Says Corn Is Not to Blame.

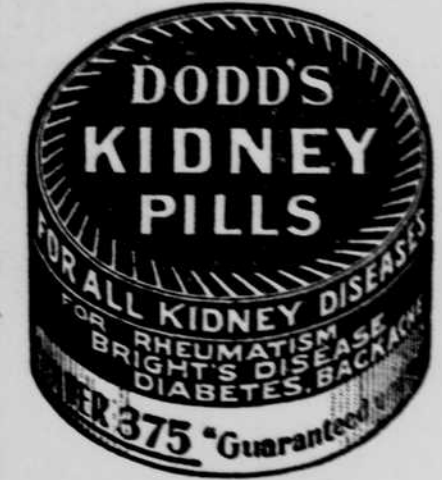
London, May 14.—Dr. Sambon, a member of the Field committee which has been investigating the disease pellagra, telegraphs from Rome that the committee has definitely proved that maize or Indian corn is not the cause of pellagra.

The committee finds that the parasite conveyor of the disease is the "stimulium repans," a species of biting gnat.

A Wonder Worker.
Sapleigh—Ah, speaking of electricity, that makes me think—
Miss Keene—Really, Mr. Sapleigh! Isn't it remarkable what electricity can do!

The Bald-Headed Man.
"The wife's clothes must match the husband's hair this year."
"That's all right; my wife's dresses are always decollette."

Levin's Single Binder cigar is never doped—only tobacco in its natural state.
Your light goes down as the temperature rises in your neck.



Send postal for Free Package of Paxtine. Better and more economical than liquid antiseptics for all toilet uses.

PAXTINE TOILET ANTISEPTIC

Gives one a sweet breath; clean, white, germ-free teeth—antiseptically clean mouth and throat—purifies the breath after smoking—dispels all disagreeable perspiration and body odors—much appreciated by delicate women. A quick remedy for sore eyes and catarrh.

A little Paxtine powder dissolved in a glass of hot water makes a delightful antiseptic solution, possessing extraordinary cleansing, germicidal and healing power, and absolutely harmless to the system. Try a Sample. 50c. a large box, druggists or by mail.

THE PAXTINE TOILET CO., BOSTON, MASS.

WESTERN CANADA

What Prof. Shaw, the Well-Known Agriculturist, Says About It: "I would sooner raise cattle in Western Canada than in the corn belt of the United States. It is a better field for the farmer. Your market will improve. The soil is rich. The climate is better. The land is more fertile. The water is pure. The people are honest. The government is fair. The law is just. The courts are swift. The roads are good. The schools are free. The churches are open. The hospitals are clean. The prisons are humane. The army is brave. The navy is strong. The air is fresh. The water is pure. The land is fertile. The people are happy. The government is good. The law is just. The courts are swift. The roads are good. The schools are free. The churches are open. The hospitals are clean. The prisons are humane. The army is brave. The navy is strong. The air is fresh. The water is pure. The land is fertile. The people are happy. The government is good. The law is just. The courts are swift. The roads are good. 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