THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

BY MARY ROBERTS RINEHART ILI USTRATIONS BY RAYWATERS

SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Amidst nuheadquarters at Sunnyside, merous difficulties the serv. As Miss Innes locked up t As Miss lines locked up for the night she was startled by a dark figure on the veranda. She passed a terr ble night which was filled with unscemly noises

CHAPTER II .- Continued.

"There's going to be a death!" she wailed. "Oh, Miss Rachel, there's going to be a death!"

"There will be," I said grimly, "if you don't keep quiet, Liddy Allen."

And so we sat there until morning. wondering if the candle would last until dawn, and arranging what trains we could take back to town. If we had only stuck to that decision and gone back before it was too late!

The sun came finally, and from my window I watched the trees along the drive take shadowy form, gradually lose their ghostlike appearance, become gray and then green. The Greenwood club showed itself a dab of white against the hill across the valley, and an early robin or two hopped around in the dew. Not until the milk-toy and the sun came, about the same time, did I dare to open the door into the hall and look around. Everything was as we had left it. Trunks were heaped here and there, ready for the trunk-room, and through an end window of stained glass came a streak of red and yellow daylight that was eminently cheerful. The milk-boy was pounding somewhere below, and the day had begun.

Thomas Johnson came ambling up the drive about half-past six, and we could hear him clattering around on the lower floor, opening shutters. I had to take Liddy to her room upshe would find something uncanny. In fact, when she did not, having now the courage of daylight, she was actually disappointed.

Well, we did not go back to town that day.

I warned Liddy not to mention what had happened to anybody, and tele Liddy rapped at the door. She was ure in what happened later. phoned to town for servants. Then, after a breakfast which did more I went on a short tour of investigation. The sounds had come from the qualms I began there. At first I found carefully. nothing. Since then I have developed wers of observation, but at that time I was a novice. The small cardroom seemed undisturbed. I looked for footprints, which is, I believe, the conventional thing to do, although my experience has been that as clews both footprints and thumb-marks are more useful in fiction than in fact. But the stairs in that wing offered

with linen that had come from town. scratch. For three steps the scratch horsehair to hold them. In the cenas if some object had fallen, striking was odd enough, but not intrinsically each one. Then for four steps nothing. of great value. Its interest for me On the fifth step below was a round lay in this: Liddy had found it lying dent in the hard wood. That was all, in the top of the hamper which had and it seemed little enough, except blocked the east-wing stairs. that I was positive the marks had not been there the day before.

It bore out my theory of the sound, which had been for all the world like place, and I was glad enough to take the bumping of a metallic object down her. She looked as though she might a flight of steps. The four steps had be equal to a dozen of Liddy, with her been skipped. I reasoned that an iron bar, for instance, would do something of the sort-strike two or three steps. end down, then turn over, jumping a few stairs, and landing with a thud,

Iron bars, however, do not fall down-stairs in the middle of the night alone. Coupled with the figure on the veranda the agency by which it climbed might be assumed. But-and here was the thing that puzzled me most-the doors were all fastened that morning, the windows unmolested, and the particular door from the card room to the veranda had a combination lock of which I held the key, and which had not been tampered was not a festive meal.

I fixed on an attempt at burglary, attempt frustrated by the falling of got out my knitting. the object, whatever it was, that had understand; how the intruder had eswhich, in the absence of a butler, had remained downstairs over night.

from Casanova, with a fresh relay of and drove around to the front of the house, where I was awaiting him.

"Two dollars," he said in reply to my question. "I don't charge full rates, because, bringin' 'em up all summer as I do, it pays to make a special price. When they got off the train I sez, sez I: 'There's another bunch for Sunnyside, cook, parlor maid and all.' Yes'm-six summers, and a new lot never less than once a month. They won't stand for the country and the lonesomeness, 1

reckon." But with the presence of



"I Was Roused by a Revolver Shot."

the thing to do.

she said. "It must be Mr. Halsey's. but it seems queer how it got there." it carefully

"Where was it? In the bottom of tion. the hamper?" I asked.

"On the very top," she replied. "It's a mercy it didn't fall out on the way." When Liddy had gone I examined At the top of the flight had been the fragment attentively. I had never

> That afternoon the Armstrongs' housekeeper, a youngish good-looking woman, applied for Mrs. Ralston's

CHAPTER III.

in three days.

snapping black eyes and heavy jaw.

Her name was Anne Watson, and I

Mr. John Bailey Appears.

I had dinner served in the breakfast room. Somehow the huge dining room depressed me, and Thomas, cheerful enough all day, allowed his spirits to go down with the sun. He had a habit of watching the corners of the room, left shadowy by the candles on the table, and altogether it

Dinner over I went into the living room. I had three hours before the as the most natural explanation-an children could possibly arrive, and I

The chug of the automobile as it roused me. Two things I could not climbed the hill was the most welcome sound I had heard for a long caped with everything locked, and time, and with Gertrude and Halsey why he had left the small silver, actually before me, my troubles seemed over for good. Gertrude stood smiling in the hall, with her hat quite In the afternoon a back came up over one ear, and her bair in every direction under her pink veil. Ger servants. The driver took them with trude is a very pretty girl, no matter a flourish to the servants' entrance, how her hat is, and I was not surprised when Halsey presented a goodme and looked at Trude-that is the ridiculous nickname Gertrude brought

from school. "I have brought a guest, Aunt Ray," Halsey said. "I want you to adopt him into your affections and your Saturday-to-Monday list. Let me present John Bailey, only you must call him Jack. In 12 hours he'll be calling you

"Aunt': I know him." We shook hands, and I got a chance to look at Mr. Bailey; he was a tall the Greenwood club, and Liddy was

bunch" of servants my courage re-1 small mustache. I remember wondervived, and late in the afternoon came ing why; he seemed to have a good a message from Gertrude that she and | mouth and when he smfled his teeth | Halsey would arrive that night at were above the average. One never that gruesome figure on the floor, about 11 o'clock, coming in the car knows why certain men cling to a stairs, however—she was quite sure from Richfield. Things were looking messy upper lip that must get into and afraid to come back, drove before up; and when Beulah, my cat, a most things, any more than one under- her three terrified women servants intelligent animal, found some early stands some women building up their into the drawing room, which was as catnip on a bank near the house and hair on wire atrocities. Otherwise, near as any of them would venture. rolled in it in a feline ecstasy, I de- he was very good to look at, stalwart cided that getting back to nature was and tanned, with the direct gaze that I like. I am particular about Mr. Bai-While I was dressing for dinner, ley, because he was a prominent fig-

think she was worrying about the bro- and went up to bed very soon. I many sheep. In a short time, although credit to Thomas' heart than his head, ken mirror and its augury, more than made up my mind to tell them noth it seemed hours, a car came rushing anything else. When she came in she ing until the next day, and then to up, and Anne Watson, who had waited was holding something in her hand, make as light of our excitement as to dress, opened the door. Three men east wing, and not without some and she laid it on the dressing table possible. After all, what had I to tell? from the Greenwood club, in all kinds "I found it in the linen hamper," window; a crash in the night; a a Mr. Jarvis, but the others were a cuff-button! As for Thomas and his It was the half of a link cuff but- forebodings, it was always my belief ton of unique design, and I looked at that a negro is one part thief, one part pigment, and the rest supersti-

It was Saturday night. The two said. "I think it is murder." men went to the billiard room, and I could hear them talking as I went upstairs. It seemed that Halsey had son knocked over a chair. The men stopped at the Greenwood club for were visibly impressed. placed a tall wicker hamper, packed seen it before, and I was certain it gasolene and found Jack Bailey there, was not Halsey's. It was of Italian with the Sunday golf crowd. Mr. Bai-It stood at the edge of the top step, workmanship, and consisted of a ley had not been hard to persuadealmost barring passage, and on the mother-of-pearl foundation, encrusted probably Gertrude knew why-and step below it was a long, fresh with tiny seed-pearls, strung on they had carried him off triumphantly. I roused Liddy to get them somewas repeated, gradually diminishing, ter was a small ruby. The trinket thing to eat-Thomas was beyond reach in the lodge-and paid no at and they all hurried across the room. tention to her evident terror of the kitchen regions. Then I went to bed. remember that-and then feeling mylast thing I remember was the howl their brief examination was over, and of a dog in front of the house. It wailed a crescendo of woe that trailed | chair. off hopefully, only to break out afresh from a new point of the compass.

was roused by a revolver shot. The his own home, too." sound seemed to come from just out dined that evening for the first time side my door. For a moment I could not move. Then-I heard Gertrude stirring in her room, and the next moment she had thrown open the connecting door.

> "O. Aunt Ray! Aunt Ray!" she cried hysterically. "Some one has

been killed!" "Thieves," I said shortly. "Thank goodness, there are some men in the house to-night." I was getting into my slippers and a bath-robe, and Gertrude with shaking hands was lighting a lamp. Then we opened the door into the hall, where, crowded on the upper landing of the stairs, the maids, white-faced and trembling, were peering down, headed by Liddy. I was greeted by a series of low screams and questions, and I tried to quiet them. Gertrude had dropped on a chair and sat there limp and shiv-

ering. I went at once across the hall to Halsey's room and knocked; then I pushed the door open. It was empty; the bed had not been occupied!

"He must be in Mr. Bailey's room," said excitedly, and followed by Liddy, we went there. Like Halsey's, it had not been occupied! Gertrude was looking young man, who bowed at on her feet now, but she leaned against the door for support.

"They have been killed!" she gasped. Then she caught me by the arm and dragged me toward the stairs. "They may only be hurt, and we must find them," she said, her eves dilated with excitement.

I don't remember how we got down the stairs; I do remember expecting every moment to be killed. The cook was at the telephone upstairs, calling fellow, perhaps 30, and he wore a behind me, afraid to come and not



living room and the drawing room undisturbed. Somehow I felt that whatever we found would be in the cardroom or on the staircase, and nothing but the fear that Halsey was in danger drove me on; with every step my knees seemed to give way under me. Gertrude was ahead and in the cardroom she stopped, holding her candle high. Then she pointed silently to the doorway into the hall beyond. Huddled there on the floor, face down, with his arms extended, was a man. Gertrude ran forward with a gasp-

ing sob, "Jack," she cried, "Oh, Jack!" Liddy had run, screaming, and the two of us were there alone. It was Gertrude who turned him over, finally, until we could see his white face, and then she drew a deep breath and dropped limply to her knees. It was the body of a man, a gentleman, in a dinner coat and white waistcoat, stained now with blood-the body of a man I had never seen before.

CHAPTER IV.

Where Is Halsey? Gertrude gazed at the face in a kind

of fascination. Then she put out her hands blindly, and I thought she was going to faint.

"He has killed him!" she muttered almost inarticulately; and at that, because my nerves were going, I gave her a good shake.

"What do you mean?" I said frantically. There was a depth of grief and conviction in her tone that was worse than anything she could have said. The shake braced her, anyhow, and she seemed to pull herself together. But not another word would she say; she stood gazing down at while Liddy, ashamed of her flight

Once in the drawing room, Gertrude collapsed and went from one fainting spell into another. I had all I could do to keep Liddy from drowning her with cold water, and the maids hudhardly herself yet, but privately I Gertrude was tired with the trip died in a corner, as much use as so An inquisitive face peering in at a of costumes, hurrled in. I recognized strangers.

"What's wrong?" the Jarvis man asked-and we made a strange picture, no doubt. "Nobody hurt, is there?" He was looking at Gertrude.

"Worse than that, Mr. Jarvis," I At the word there was a commotion. The cook began to cry, and Mrs. Wat-

"Not any member of the family?" Mr. Jarvis asked, when he had got

his breath. "No," I said; and motioning Liddy to look after Gertrude, I led the way with a lamp to the cardroom door. One of the men gave an exclamation, Mr. Jarvis took the lamp from me-I The men were still in the billiard self getting dizzy and light-headed I room when I finally dozed off, and the closed my eyes. When I opened them Mr. Jarvis was trying to put me in a

"You must get upstairs," he said firmly, "you and Miss Gertrude, too. At three o'clock in the morning I This has been a terrible shock. In

> I stared at him without comprehension. "Who is it?" I asked with difficulty. There seemed a band drawn

tight around my throat. "It is Arnold Armstrong," he said, looking at me oddly, "and he has been

murdered—in his father's house." After a minute I gathered myself together and Mr. Jarvis helped me into the living room. Liddy had got Gertrude upstairs, and the two strange men from the club stayed with the body. The reaction from the shock and strain was tremendous; I was collapsed—and then Mr. Jarvis asked me a question that brought

back my wandering faculties.

"Where is Halsey?" he asked. "Halsey!" Suddenly Gertrude's stricken face rose before me-the empty room upstairs. Where was Halsey? "He was here, wasn't he?" Mr. Jar-

vis persisted. "He stopped at the club on his way over." "I-don't know where he is," I said feebly.

One of the men from the club came in, asked for the telephone, and I could hear him excitedly talking, saying something about coroners and detectives. Mr. Jarvis leaned over to

"Why don't you trust me, Miss Innes?" he said. "If I can do anything I will. But tell me the whole thing." I did, finally, from the beginning, and when I told of Jack Bailey's being in the house that night he gave a long whistle.

"I wish they were both here," he said when I finished. "Whatever mad prank took them away, it would look better if they were here. Especially-"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



MADE PROMISE OF SECRECY

Therefore Caller Could Only Guess Who Had Taught Youngster to Stand on His Head.

"The venerable countess of Cardigan, the author, you know, of that wicked book of memoirs, thinks the modern girl is too athletic and hoydenish," said an English visitor to New York.

"The countess of Cardigan often tells of a young man who was drinking tea with a beautiful girl when her little brother slipped into the room. "'Mr. Mannering,' the boy asked,

'can you stand on your head?' "'No, said the visitor, laughing, 'I don't believe I can.'

"'Well, I can,' said the boy. 'Look here. "And he stood on his head very

neatly in the corner. "'Ha, ha!' laughed Mr. Mannering. 'And who taught you that?' "The urchin frowned.

"'Sister,' he said, 'told me I must never tell."

Wedding Fee Counterfeit.

A well-dressed stranger entered the office of Justice William B. Williams, Montclair, N. J., and after shaking hands astonished the justice by saying: "I'm here to redeem that counterfeit \$10 bill I passed on you. Two years ago I called on you with my girl and two witnesses and you married us. I handed you a \$10 bill. I had a counterfeit in my pocketbook that I'd carried for several years. I never missed it until yesterday. Then I remembered that I'd accidentally handed you the bill." The caller produced a good \$10 bill, but the justice refused to take it. "Don't let that worry you, my dear fellow," he laughed. "I never knew it was a counterfeit. No kind of money sticks

to me over night. I'm married, my-

self."

They Surely Would. A little American boy with his father was visiting a market in a Mexican city. He saw a little native girl with a small basketful of red peppers, of which she was eating one. His father was about to say: "She thinks she is very smart," as the son called his attention to it. The boy spoke up quickly, knowing what was to be said: "Pa, would those red peppers make you smart if you eat all of them?" His father replied: "Yes, son."

Despisery.

Little Girl-Mother, that's such a nasty little boy; whenever he passes me he makes a face. Mother-Very rude of him. I hope

you don't do it back. Little Girl-Oh, dear, no! I simply turn up my nose and treat him with despisery.

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