

# SERIAL STORY

## BLINDFOLDED

A Mystery Story of San Francisco

BY EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT

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### SYNOPSIS.

Giles Dudley arrived in San Francisco to join his friend and distant relative Henry Wilton, whom he was to assist in an important and mysterious task, and who accompanied Dudley on the ferry boat trip into the city. The remarkable resemblance of the two men is noted and commented on by passengers on the ferry. They see a man with snake eyes, which sends a thrill through Dudley. Wilton postpones an explanation of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but occurrences cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. Wilton leaves Giles in their room, with instruction to await his return and shoot any one who tries to enter. Outside there is heard shouts and curses and the noise of a quarrel. Henry rushes in and at his request the roommates quickly exchange clothes, and he hurries out again. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help," and he runs out to find some one being assaulted by a half dozen men. He summons a policeman but they are unable to find any trace of a crime. Giles returns to his room and hunts for some evidence that might explain his strange mission. He finds a map which he endeavors to decipher. Henry rushes in and summons to the morgue and there finds the dead body of his friend, Henry Wilton. And thus Wilton dies without ever explaining to Dudley the puzzling work he was to perform in San Francisco. In order to discover the secret mission his friend had entrusted to him, Dudley continues his disguise and permits himself to be known as Henry Wilton. Dudley, mistaken for Wilton, is employed by Knapp to assist in a stock brokerage deal. "Dicky" takes the supposed Wilton to Mother Borton's. Mother Borton discovers that he is not Wilton. The lights are turned out and a free for all fight follows. Giles Dudley finds himself cased in a room with Mother Borton who makes a confidant of him. He can learn nothing about the mysterious boy further than that it is Tim Terrill and Darby Meeker who are after him. He is told that "Dicky" Nahl is a traitor, playing both hands in the game. Giles finds himself locked in a room. He escapes through a window.

### CHAPTER VIII. (Continued).

I moved slowly down a step at a time, then from over-cautiousness tripped and came down the last three steps at once with the clatter of a four-horse team.

But nobody stirred. Then I glanced through the open door, and was stricken cold with astonishment. The room was empty!

The chairs and tables that a few hours ago I had seen scattered about were gone. There was no sign that the place had been occupied in months.

I stepped into the room that I had seen crowded with eager friends and enemies, eating, drinking, ready for desperate deeds. My step echoed strangely with the echo of an untenanted house. The bar and the shelves behind it were swept clear of the bottles and glasses that had filled them.

Bewildered and apprehensive, I wondered whether, after all, the events of the night were not a fantastic dream.

There was, however, no time to waste in prying into this mystery. By my watch it was close on 9 o'clock, and Doddridge Knapp might even now be making his way to the office where he had stationed me.

The saloon's front doors were locked fast, but the side door that led from the stairway to the street was fastened only with a spring lock, and I swung it open and stepped to the sidewalk.

A load left my spirits as the door closed behind me. The fresh air of the morning was like wine after the close and musty atmosphere I had been breathing.

I hurried along the streets with but a three-minute stop to swallow a cup of coffee and a roll, and once more mounted the stairs to the office and opened the door to Number 15.

The place was in disorder. The books that had been arranged on the desk and shelves were now scattered about in confusion, as though they had been hurriedly examined and thrown aside in a fruitless search. This was a disturbing incident, and I was surprised to discover that the door into the adjoining room was ajar. I pushed it wide open, and started back. Before me stood Doddridge Knapp, his face pale as the face of a corpse, and his eyes staring as though the dead had risen before him.

### CHAPTER IX.

#### A Day in the Market.

The King of the Street stood for a moment staring at me with that strange and fearsome gaze. What was there in that dynamic glance that struck a chill to my spirit as though the very fountain of life had been attacked? Was it the manifestation of

the powerful will behind that mask? Was it terror or anger that was to be read in the fiery eyes that gleamed from beneath those bushy brows, and in the play of the cruel mouth, which from under that yellow-gray mustache gave back the sign of the Wolf?

"Have you any orders, sir?" I asked in as calm a voice as I could command.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the Wolf slowly, covering his fangs.

If flashed on me that the attack in the Borton den was of his planning, that Terrill was his tool, and that he had supposed me dead. It was thus that I could account for his startled gaze and evident discomposure.

"Nine o'clock was the time, you said," I suggested deferentially. "I believe it's a minute or two past."

"Oh, yes," said Doddridge Knapp, pulling himself together. "Come in here."

He looked suspiciously at me as he took a seat at his desk and motioned me to another.

"I had a little turn," he said, eying me nervously; "a vertigo, I believe the doctor called it. Just reach my overcoat pocket there, will you?—the left-hand side. Yes, bring me that flask."

He poured out a small glass of liquor, and the rich odor of brandy rose through the room. Then he took a vial from an inside pocket, counted a few drops into the glass and drank it at a swallow.

When he had cleared his throat of the fiery liquor, the Wolf turned to me with a more composed and kindly expression.

"And now to business," said my employer with decision. "Take down these orders."

The King of the Street was himself once more, and I marveled again at the quickness and clearness of his directions. I was to buy one hundred shares of this stock, sell five hundred of that stock, buy one thousand of another in blocks of one hundred, and sell the same in a single block at the last session.

"And the last thing you do," he continued, "buy every share of Omega that is offered. There'll be a big block of it thrown on the market, and more in the afternoon. Buy it, what-



ever the price. There's likely to be a big slump. Don't bid for it—don't keep up the price, you understand—but get it."

"If somebody else is snapping it up, do I understand that I'm not to bid over them?"

"You're not to understand anything of the kind," he said, with a little disgust in his tone. "You're to get the stock. You've bought and sold enough to know how to do that. But don't start a boom for the price. Let her go down. Sabe?"

I felt that there was deep water ahead.

"Perfectly," I said. "I think I see the whole thing."

The King of the Street looked at me with a grim smile.

"Maybe you do, but all the same you'd better keep your money out of this little deal unless you can spare it as well as not. Well, get back to your room. You've got your check-book all right?"

Alone once more I was in despair of unraveling the tangle in which I was involved. I felt convinced that Doddridge Knapp was the mover in the plots that sought my life. He had, I felt sure, believed me dead, and was startled into fear at my unheralded appearance. Yet why should he trust me with his business? I could not doubt that the buying and selling he had given to my care were important. I knew nothing about the price of stocks, but I was sure that the orders he had given me involved many thousands of dollars. Yet it might be—the thought struck home to me—that the credit had not been provided for me, and my checks on the Nevada bank would serve only to land me in jail.

The disturbed condition of the books attracted my attention once more. The volumes were scattered over the desk and thrown about the room as though somebody had been seeking for a mislaid document. I looked curiously over them as I replaced them on the shelves. They were law-books, California Reports, and the ordinary text-books and form-books of the at-

torney. All bore on the fly-leaf the name of Horace H. Plymire, but no paper or other indication of ownership could I find.

I wondered idly who this Plymire might be, and pictured to myself some old attorney who had fallen into the hands of Doddridge Knapp, and had, through misfortune, been forced to sell everything for the mess of pottage to keep life in him. But there was small time for musing, and I went out to do Doddridge Knapp's bidding in the stock-gambling whirlpool of Pine street.

It was easy to find Bockstein and Eppner, and there could be no mistaking the prosperity of the firm. The indifference of the clerks to my presence, and the evident contempt with which an order for a hundred shares of something was being taken from an apologetic old gentleman were enough to assure of that.

Bockstein and Eppner were together, evidently consulting over the business to be done. Bockstein was tall and gray-haired, with a stubby gray beard. Eppner was short and a little stooped, with a blue-black mustache, snapping blue-black eyes and strong blue-black dots over his face where his beard struggled vainly against the devastating razor. Both were strongly marked with the shrewd, money-getting visage. I set forth my business.

"You want to gif a larch order?" said Bockstein, looking over my memoranda. "Do you haf references?"

"Yes," echoed Eppner. "References are customary, you know." He spoke in a high-keyed voice that had irritating suggestions in it.

"Is there any reference better than cash?" I asked.

The partners looked at each other.

"None," they replied.

"How much will secure you on the order?"

They named a heavy margin, and the sum total took my heart into my mouth. How large a balance I could draw against I had not the faintest idea. Possibly this was a trap to throw me into jail as a common swindler attempting to pass worthless checks. But there was no time to hesitate. I drew a check for the amount, signed Henry Wilton's name and tossed it over to Bockstein.

"All right," said the senior partner. "Zhust talk it ofer vit Misdor Eppner. He goes on der floor."

I knew well enough what was wanted. My financial standing was to be tested by the head of the firm, while the junior partner kept me amused.

Eppner was quick to take my ideas. A few words of explanation and he understood perfectly what I wanted.

"You have not bought before?" It was an interrogation, not an assertion.

"Oh, yes," I said carelessly, "but not through you, I believe."

"No, no, I think not. I should have remembered you."

I thought this might be a favorable opportunity to glean a little information of what was going on in the market.

"Are there any good deals in prospect?" I ventured.

I could see in the blue-black depths of his eyes that an unfavorable opinion he had conceived of my judgment was deepened by this question. There was doubtless in it the flavor of the amateur.

"We never advise our customers," was the highkeyed reply.

"Certainly not," I replied. "I don't want advice—merely to know what is going on."

"Excuse me, but I never gossip. It is a rule I make."

"It might interfere with your opportunities to pick up a good bargain now and then," I suggested, as the blue-black man seemed at a loss for words.

"We never invest in stocks," was the curt reply.

"Excellent idea," said I, "for those who know too much or too little."

Eppner failed to smile, and could think of nothing to say. I was a little abashed, notwithstanding the tone of haughty indifference I took. I began to feel very young before this machine-like impersonation of the market.

Bockstein relieved the embarrassment of the situation by coming in out of breath, with a brave pretense of having been merely consulting a customer in the next room.

"You haf explained to Misdor Eppner?" he inquired. "Den all is done. Here is a card to der Board Room. If orders you haf to gif, Eppner vill dake dem on der floor. Zhust gif him der check for margin, and all is vell."

At the end of this harangue I found myself outside the office, with Bockstein's back waddling toward the private room where the partners were to have their last consultation before going to the Board.

My check had been honored, then, and Bockstein had assured himself of my solvency. In the rebound from anxiety, I swelled with the pride of a capitalist—on Doddridge Knapp's money.

In the Board Room of the big Exchange the uproar had given me a suggestion that the business of buying and selling stocks was carried on in a somewhat less conventional manner than the trade in groceries. But

it had not quite prepared me for the scene in the Exchange.

After a little I was able to discover that the shouts and yells and screams, the shaking of fists, and the waving of arms were merely a more or less energetic method of bidding for stocks; that the ringing of gongs and the bellow of the big man who smiled on the bear-garden from the high desk were merely the audible signs that another stock was being called; and that the brazen-voiced reading of a roll was merely the official announcement of the record of bargain and sale that had been going on before me.

It was my good fortune to make out so much before the purchase of the stocks on my order list was completed. The crisis was at hand in which I must have my wits about me, and be ready to act for myself.

Eppner rushed up and reported the bargains made, handing me a slip with the figures he had paid for the stocks. "Any more orders?" he gasped. He was trembling with excitement and suppressed eagerness for the fray.

"Yes," I shouted above the roar about me. "I want to buy Omega."

He gave a look that might have been a warning, if I could have read it; but it was gone with a shrug as though he would say, "Well, it's no business of mine."

"How much?" he asked. "Wait!"

He started away at a scream from the front, but returned in a moment. He had bought or sold something, but I had not the least idea what it was, or which he had done.

"It's coming!" he yelled in my ear.

The gong rang. There was a confused cry from the man at the big desk. And pandemonium let loose.

"Omega opens at sixty-five," shouted Eppner.

"Bid sixty," I shouted in reply, "but get all you can, even if you have to pay sixty-five."

Eppner gave a bellow, and skated into a group of fat men, gesticulating violently. The roar increased, if such a thing were possible.

In a minute Eppner was back, perspiring, and I fancied a trifle worried.

"They're dropping it on me," he gasped in my ear. "Five hundred at sixty-two and one thousand at sixty. Small lots coming fast and big ones on the way."

"Good! Bid fifty-five, and then fifty, but get them."

With a roar he rushed into the midst of a whirling throng. I saw twenty brokers about him, shouting and threatening. One in his eagerness jumped upon the shoulders of a fat man in front of him, and shook a paper under his nose.

I could make out nothing of what was going on, except that the excitement was tremendous.

Twice Eppner reported to me. The stock was being hammered down down stroke by stroke. There was a rush to sell. Fifty-five—fifty-three—fifty, came the price—then by leaps to forty-five and forty. It was a panic. At last the gong sounded, and the scene was over.

Eppner reported at the end of the call. He had bought for me twelve thousand five hundred shares, over ten thousand of them below fifty. The total was frightful. There was half a million dollars to pay when the time for settlement came. It was folly to suppose that my credit at the Nevada was of this size. But I put a bold face on it, gave a check for the figure that Eppner named, and rose.

"Any more orders?" he asked.

"Not till afternoon."

As I passed into the street I was astonished at the swift transformation that had come over it. The block about the Exchange was crowded with a tossing throng, hundreds upon hundreds pushing toward its fateful doors. But where cheerfulness and hope had ruled, fear and gloom now vibrated in electric waves before me. The faces turned to the pitiless, polished granite front of the great gambling-hall were white and drawn, and on them sat Ruin and Despair.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Alligators in Ecuador.

A new minor industry that is developing in Ecuador is the killing and skinning of alligators. This industry was launched in 1903 by an American, who went to Guayaquil for the purpose of hunting down the myriads of alligators which abound in the River Guayas and its tributaries. He was markedly successful. The business was temporarily interrupted in the early part of 1905 by the untimely death of the American, who had started the fun, but it has recently been resumed. The total value of the alligator skins exported during the years 1903, 1904, 1905 and 1906 was \$35,000. The skins shipped from Ecuador to this country last year weighed 57,000 pounds, and were valued at \$4,873.—N. O. Times-Democrat.

### Married in Sackcloth.

In order not to lose a legacy of \$25,000 left to her by an eccentric aunt, a young lady was, in France, some little time ago, married wearing a wedding dress which, though of fashionable cut, was made of sackcloth.

### An All-Round Book.

The book agent had spent a discouraging morning, and when he had an opportunity to scan the face of Ell Hobbs at close range, he felt that there was small chance of making a sale. However, he had more than one method of suggestion.

"Sitting out here on the piazza afternoons with your wife, this would be the very book to read aloud," he said, ingratiatingly, to Mr. Hobbs, taking the other rocking chair and opening the large red-covered volume.

"I don't read and I haven't any wife," replied Mr. Hobbs, dryly.

"Dear me!" said the book agent. "Well, if your wife is dead, perhaps there are children. Now, children find this book—"

"There are no children," interrupted Mr. Hobbs. "There's nobody but myself and my cat."

"Well," said the book agent, "don't you ever want a good heavy book to throw at her, just to ease your feelings?"—Youth's Companion.

### How It Works.

Once there was a struggling young author who was blest with many friends, all of whom told him that he was the coming great writer of the country.

So one day a bright thought struck him. He said:

"I will publish my book, and all my friends who admire it so much will buy my book, and I will be rich."

So he printed his book.

And all of his friends waited for him to send them autographed copies of his book.

And so his books were sold as junk. And ever after he didn't have any friends.—Success.

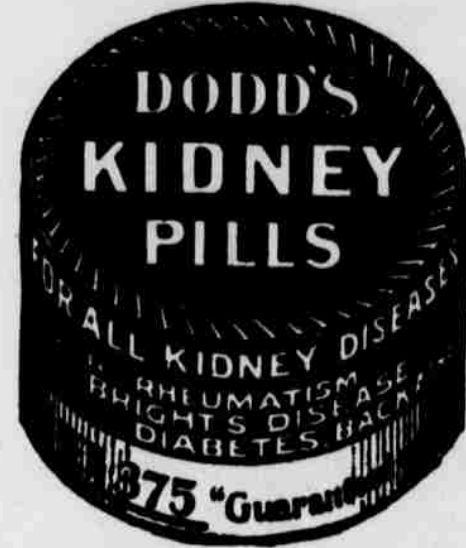
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