

SERIAL STORY

BLINDFOLDED

A Mystery Story of San Francisco

BY EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT

(Copyright 1906, the Robbs-Merrill Co.)

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. Dudley is summoned 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 room. The lights are turned out and free for all fight follows. Giles Dudley finds himself closeted 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. The supposed Wilton carries out his dead friend's work with Doddridge Knapp. He has his first experience as a capitalist in the Board Room of the Stock Exchange. Dudley receives a fictitious note purporting to be from Knapp, the forgery of which he readily detects. Dudley gets his first knowledge of Decker, who is Knapp's enemy on the Board. The forged note mystifies Knapp. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is struck by the beauty of Luella, his daughter. More mystery about "the boy." Luella privately informs Dudley that she has discovered his deception and knows he is not Wilton.

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

The sight that met my eyes was astonishing. Clothes, books, papers, were scattered over the floor and bed and chairs. The carpet had been partly ripped up, the mattress torn apart, the closet cleared out, and every corner of the room had been ransacked.

It was clear to my eye that this was no ordinary case of robbery. The search, it was evident, was not for money and jewelry alone, and bulkier property had been despoiled. The men who had torn the place to pieces must, I surmised, have been after papers of some kind.

I came at once to the conclusion that I had been favored by a visit from my friends, the enemy. As they had failed to find me in, they had looked for some written memoranda of the object of their search.

I knew well that they had found nothing among the clothing or papers that Henry had left behind. I had searched through these myself, and the sole document that could bear on the mystery was at that moment fast in my inside pocket. I was inclined to scout the idea that Henry Wilton had hidden anything under the carpet or in the mattress, or in any secret place. The threads of the mystery were carried in his head, and the correspondence, if there had been any, was destroyed.

As I was engaged in putting the room to rights the door swung back, and I jumped to my feet to face a man who stood on the threshold.

"Hello!" he cried. "House-cleaning again?"

It was Dicky Nahl, and he paused with a smile on his face.

"Ah, Dicky!" I said with an effort to keep out of my face and voice the suspicions I had gained from the incidents of the visit to the Borton place. "Entirely unpremeditated, I assure you."

"Well, you're making a thorough job of it," he said with a laugh.

"Fact is," said I ruefully, "I've been entertaining angels—of the black kind—unawares. I was from home last night, and I find that somebody has made himself free with my property while I was away."

"Whew!" whistled Dicky. "Guess they were after you."

I gave Dicky a sidelong glance in a vain effort to catch more of his mean-

ing than was conveyed by his words. "Shouldn't be surprised," I replied dryly, picking up an armful of books. "I'd expect them to be looking for me in the book-shelf or inside the mattress-cover, or under the carpet."

Dicky laughed joyously. "Well, they did rather turn things upside down," he chuckled. "Did they get anything?" And he fell to helping me zealously.

"Not that I can find out," I replied. "Nothing of value, anyhow."

"Not any paper, or anything of that sort?" asked Dicky anxiously.

"Dicky, my boy," said I; "there are two kinds of fools. The other is the man who writes his business on a sheet of paper and forgets to burn it."

Dicky grinned merrily. "Gad, you're getting a turn for epigram! You'll be writing for the Argonaut first we know of."

"Well, you'll allow me a shade of common sense, won't you?"

"I don't know," said Dicky, considering the proposition doubtfully. "It might have been awkward if you had left anything lying about. But if you had real good sense you'd have had the guards here. What are you paying them for, anyhow?"

I saw difficulties in the way of explaining to Dicky why I had not ordered the guards on duty.

"Oh, by the way," said Dicky suddenly, before a suitable reply had come to me; "how about the scads—spondulicks—you know? Yesterday was pay-day, but you didn't show up."

I don't know whether my jaw dropped or not. My spirits certainly did.

"By Jove, Dicky!" I exclaimed, catching my breath. "It slipped my mind, clear. I haven't got at our—ahem—banker, either."

I saw now what that mysterious money was for—or a part of it, at all events. What I did not see was how I was to get it, and how to pay it to my men.

"That's rough," said Dicky sympathetically. "I'm dead broke."

It would appear then that Dicky looked to me for pay, whether or not he felt bound to me in service.

"There's one thing I'd like explained before a settlement," said I grimly, as I straightened out the carpet; "and that is the little performance for my benefit the other night."

Dicky cocked his head on one side, and gave me an uneasy glance.

"Explanation?" he said in affected surprise.

"Yes," said I sternly. "It looked like a plant. I was within one of getting a knife in me."

"What became of you?" inquired Dicky. "We looked around for you for



THE SIGHT THAT MET HIS EYES WAS ASTONISHING

an hour, and were afraid you had been carried off."

"That's all right, Dicky," I said. "I know how I got out. What I want to know is how I got in—taken in."

"I don't know," said Dicky anxiously. "I was regularly fooled, myself. I thought they were fishermen, all right enough, and I never thought that Terrill had the nerve to come in there. I was fooled by his disguise, and he gave the word, and I thought sure that Richmond had sent him." Dicky had dropped all banter and was speaking with the tone of sincerity.

"Well, it's all right now, but I don't want any more slips of that sort. Who was hurt?"

"Trent got a bad cut in the side. One of the Terrill gang was shot. I heard it was only through the arm or leg, I forgot which."

I was consumed with the desire to ask what had become of Borton's, but I suspected that I was supposed to know, and prudently kept the question to myself.

"Well, come along," said I. "The room will do well enough now. Oh, here's a ten, and I'll let you know as soon as I get the rest. Where can I find you?"

"At the old place," said Dicky; "three twenty-six."

"Clay?" I asked in desperation.

Dicky gave me a wondering look as though he suspected my mind was going.

"No—Geary. What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, to be sure. Geary street, of course. Well, let me know if anything turns up. Keep a close watch on things."

Dicky looked at me in some apparent perplexity as I walked up the stair to my Clay street office, but gave only some laughing answer as he turned back.

But I was in far from a laughing humor myself. The problem of paying the men raised fresh prospects of trouble, and I reflected grimly that if the money was not found I might be in more danger from my unpaid mercenaries than from the enemy.

Ten o'clock passed, and eleven, with no sign from Doddridge Knapp, and I wondered if the news I had carried him of the activities of Terrill and of Decker had disarranged his plans.

I tried the door into Room 16. It was locked, and no sound came to my ears from behind it.

"I should really like to know," I thought to myself, "whether Mr. Doddridge Knapp has left any papers in his desk that might bear on the Wilton mystery."

I tried my keys, but none of them fitted the lock. I gave up the attempt—indeed, my mind shrank from the idea of going through my employer's papers—but the desire of getting a key that would open the door was planted in my brain.

Twelve o'clock came. No Doddridge Knapp had appeared, and I sauntered down to the Exchange to pick up any items of news. It behooved me to be looking out for Doddridge Knapp's movements. If he had got another agent to carry out his schemes, I should have to prepare my lines for attack from another direction.

Wallbridge was just coming rapidly out of the Exchange.

"No," said the little man, mopping the perspiration from his shining head, "quiet as lambs to-day. Their own mothers wouldn't have known the Board from a Sunday school."

I inquired about Omega.

"Flat as a pancake," said the little man. "Nothing doing."

"What! Is it down?" I exclaimed with some astonishment.

"Lord bless you, no!" said Wallbridge, surprised in his turn. "Strong and steady at eighty, but we didn't sell a hundred shares to-day. Well, I'm in a rush. Good-by, if you don't want to buy or sell." And he hurried off without waiting for a reply.

So I was now assured that Doddridge Knapp had not displaced me in the Omega deal. It was a recess to prepare another surprise for the Street, and I had time to attend to a neglected duty.

The undertaker's shop that held the morgue looked hardly less gloomy in the afternoon sun than in the light of breaking day in which I had left it when I parted from Detective Coogan. The office was decorated mournfully to accord with the grief of friends who ordered the coffins, or the feelings of the surviving relatives on settling the bills.

"I am Henry Wilton," I explained to the man in charge. "There was a body left here by Detective Coogan to my order, I believe."

"Oh, yes," he said. "What do you want done with it?"

I explained that I wished to arrange to have it deposited in a vault for a time, as I might carry it east.

"That's easy done," he said; and he explained the details. "Would you like to see the body?" he concluded. "We embalmed it on the strength of Coogan's order."

I shrank from another look at the battered form. The awfulness of the tragedy came upon me with hardly less force than in the moment when I had first faced the mangled and bleeding body on the slab in the dead-room.

The undertaker was talking, but I knew not what he said. I was shaking with the horror and grief of the situation, and in that moment I renewed my vow to have blood for blood and life for life, if law and justice were to be had.

"We'll take it out any time," said the undertaker, with a decorous reflection of my grief upon his face. "Would you like to accompany the remains?"

I decided that I would.

"Well, there's nothing doing now. We can start as soon as we have sealed the casket."

"As soon as you can. There's nothing to wait for."

The ride to the cemetery took me through a part of San Francisco that I had not yet seen. But I paid little attention to the streets through which we passed. My mind was on the friend whose name I had taken, whose work I was to do. I was back with him in our boyhood days, and lived again for the fleeting minutes the life we had lived in common; and the resolve grew stronger on me that his fate should be avenged.

Arriving at the cemetery it was soon over. The body of Henry Wilton was committed to the vault with the single mourner looking on, and we drove rapidly back in the falling light.

I had given my address at the undertaker's shop, and the hack stopped in front of my house of mystery before

I knew where we were. Darkness had come upon the place, and the street-lamps were alight and the gas was blazing in the store-windows along the thoroughfares. As I stepped out of the carriage and gazed about me, I recognized the gloomy doorway and its neighborhood that had greeted me on my first night in San Francisco.

As I was paying the fare a stout figure stepped up to me.

"Ah, Mr. Wilton, it's you again. I turned in surprise. It was the policeman I had met on my first night in San Francisco.

"Oh, Corson, how are you?" I said heartily, recognizing him at last. I felt a sense of relief in the sight of him. The place was not one to quiet my nerves after the errand from which I had just come.

"All's well, sor, but I've a bit of paper for ye." And after some hunting he brought it forth. "I was asked to hand this to ye."

I took it in wonder. Was there something more from Detective Coogan? I tore open the envelope and read on its inclosure:

"Kum tonite to the house. Shure if youre life is wurth saveln.
"Muther Borton."

CHAPTER XIV.

Mother Borton's Advice.

I studied the note carefully, and then turned to Policeman Corson.

"When did she give you this—and where?"

"A lady?" said Corson with a grin.

"Ah, Mr. Wilton, it's too sly she is to give it to me. 'Twas a boy askin' for ye. 'Do you know him?' says he. 'I do that,' says I. 'Where is he?' says he. 'I don't know,' says I. 'Has 'e a room?' says he. 'He has,' says I. 'Where is it?' says he. 'What's that to you?' says I—"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted. "But where did he get the note?"

"I was just tellin' ye, sor," said the policeman amiably. "He shoves the note at me ag'in, an' says he, 'It's important,' says he. 'Go up there,' says I. 'Last room, top floor, right-hand side.' Before I comes to the corner up here, he's after me ag'in. 'He's gone,' says he. 'Like enough,' says I. 'When'll he be back?' says he. 'When the cows come home, sonny,' says I. 'Then there'll be the devil to pay,' says he. I pricks up my ears at this. 'Why?' says I. 'Oh, he'll be killed,' says he, 'and I'll git the derndest hekin,' says he. 'What's up?' says I, makin' a grab for him. But he ducks an' blubbers. 'Gimme that letter,' says I, 'and you just kite back to the folks that sent you, and tell them what's the matter. I'll give you a note to your man if he comes while I'm on the beat,' says I. I knows too much to try to git anything more out of him. I says to meself that Mr. Wilton ain't in the safest place in the world, and this kid's folks maybe means him well, and might know some other place to look for him. The kid jaws a bit, an' then does as I tells him, an' cuts away. That's half an hour ago, an' here you are, an' here's your letter."

I hesitated for a little before saying anything. It was with quick suspicion that I wondered why Mother Borton had secured again that gloomy and deserted house for the interview she was planning.

"That was very kind of you. You didn't know what was in the letter then?"

"No, sor," replied Corson with a touch of wounded pride. "It's not me as would open another man's letter unless in the way of me duty."

"Do you know Mother Borton?" I continued.

"Know her? know her?" returned Corson in a tone scornful of doubt on such a point. "Do I know the slickest crook in San Francisco? Ah, it's many a story I could tell you, Mr. Wilton, of the way that ould she-devil has slipped through our fingers when we thought our hands were on her throat. And it's many of her brood we have put safe in San Quentin."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Invitation to Franklin.

Several amusing incidents in the life of Benjamin Franklin have been handed down to us, many of which exhibit his rare wit and some few indicate the humor of his contemporaries.

During the course of an extended journey Franklin was obliged to wait an unusually long time for his stage. The day was very warm and sultry and not a little dusty, but all this did not ruffle the philosophical temper. The stage at last arrived, and as the door opened Franklin was much pleased to see an old friend, whom he cordially greeted, expressing his satisfaction at having secured a traveling companion. His friend, however, whose irritation was not decreased by the closely crowded stage and the intolerable weather, together with Franklin's hesitation on noting the already overburdened coach, perhaps unconsciously exclaimed:

"Come Ben-jam-in We are late now."—Judge's Library.

Japs Learning English. English is compulsory in all Japanese schools.

Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna

Cleanses the System Effectually, Dispels Colds and Headaches due to Constipation; Acts naturally, acts truly as a Laxative.

Best for Men, Women and Children—Young and Old.

To get its Beneficial Effects Always buy the Genuine which has the full name of the Company

CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP CO.

by whom it is manufactured, printed on the front of every package. SOLD BY ALL LEADING DRUGGISTS. one size only, regular price 50¢ per bottle.

The Grammar Class. The head mistress of a certain provincial school was one day examining a few of her select pupils in grammar.

"Stand up, Juan, and make me a sentence containing the word 'seldom,'" she said, pointing to a small urchin.

Juan paused as if in thought; then, with a flush of triumph on his face, replied: "Last week father had five horses, but yesterday he seldom!"

TWO CURES OF ECZEMA

Baby Had Severe Attack—Grandfather Suffered Torments with It—Owe Recovery to Cuticura.

"In 1884 my grandson, a babe, had an attack of eczema, and after trying the doctors to the extent of heavy bills and an increase of the disease and suffering, I recommended Cuticura and in a few weeks the child was well. He is to-day a strong man and absolutely free from the disease. A few years ago I contracted eczema, and became an intense sufferer. A whole winter passed without once having on shoes, nearly from the knees to the toes being covered with virulent sores. I tried many doctors to no purpose. Then I procured the Cuticura Remedies and found immediate improvement and final cure. M. W. LaRue, 845 Seventh St., Louisville, Ky., Apr. 23 and May 14, '07."

Some men decline to look upon the wine when it is red because they prefer another color.

Try Murine Eye Remedy For Red, Weak, Watery Eyes. Murine Doesn't Smart—Soothes Eye Pain. All Druggists Sell Murine at 50c. The 48 Page Book in each Pkg. is worth Dollars in every home. Ask your Druggist. Murine Eye Remedy Co., Chicago.

It's all right for a man to be a dreamer of dreams providing he wakes up occasionally and gets busy.

Lewis' Single Binder Cigar has a rich taste. Your dealer or Lewis' Factory, Peoria, Ill.

Take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves.—Lord Chesterfield.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. For children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. 25c a bottle.

The prettiest flowers are not necessarily the most fragrant.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Music isn't necessarily fragmentary because it comes in pieces.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Music isn't necessarily fragmentary because it comes in pieces.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Use Allen's Foot-Powder. Cures tired, aching, swelling feet, etc. Trial package free. A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.