

# 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. Hardly was he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help." 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. 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. Dudley gets his first knowledge of Becker, who is Knapp's enemy on the Board. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is stricken by the beauty of Luella, his daughter. He learns the note was a forgery. He is provided with four guards, Brown, Barkhouse, Fitzhugh and Porter. He learns there is to be no trouble about money as all expenses will be paid, the hire of the guards being paid by one Richmond.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

"Yes, I suppose so," said I dryly. "But the woman has done me service—saved my life, I may say—and I'm willing to forget the bad in her."  
"That's not for me to say, sor; but there's quare things happens, no doubt."  
"This note," I continued, "is written over her name. I don't know whether it came from her or not; but if she sent it I must see her. It may be a case of life or death for me."  
"An' if it didn't come from her?" asked the policeman shrewdly.  
"Then," said I grimly, "it's likely to be a case of death if I venture alone."  
"I'll tell you what, Mr. Wilton," said Corson after a pause. "If you'll wait a bit, I'll go with you—that is, if there isn't somebody else you'd like better to have by your side to-night. You don't look to have any of your friends about."

"Just the thing," I said heartily. "There's no one I'd rather have. We'll go down as soon as we can get a bite to eat."  
"I'll have to wait a bit, sor, till my relief comes. He'll be along soon. As for getting a bite, you can't do better than wait till you get to Mother Borton's. It's a rough place, but it's got a name for good cooking."

I was bewildered.  
"I guess there's not much to be got in the way of eating in the house. There was nothing left in it yesterday morning but the rats." I spoke with considerable emphasis.

"That's quare, now," he said, looking to see if there was a jest behind the words. "But 'twas all there when McPherson and I put a club to a drunk as was raising the Ould Nick in the place and smashing the bottles, not six hours ago. When we took him away in the ixpress wagon the ould woman was rowling out those long black curses in a way that would warm the heart of the fowl fiend himself."

There was some fresh mystery about this. I held my tongue with the reflection that I had better let it straighten itself out than risk a stumble by asking about things I ought to know.

Corson's relief soon appeared. "It's a nasty night," he said, buttoning up his overcoat closely, as Corson gave him a brief report of the situation on the beat.

"It's good for them as likes it dark," said Corson.

"It's just such a night as we had when Donaldson was murdered. Do you mind it?"

"Do I mind it? Am I likely to forgit it? Well, a pleasant time to you, me boy. Come along, sor. We'd better be moving. You won't mind stepping up to the hall with me, will ye, while I report?"

"Certainly not," I said with a shiver, half at the grim suggestion of murder and half at the chill of the fog and the cutting wind that blew cold vapor through to the skin.

"You've no overcoat," said Corson. "We'll stop and get one. I'll have mine from the station."

The silence of the house of mystery was no less threatening now than on the night when Henry Wilton was walking through the halls on the way to his death. But the stout-hearted policeman by my side gave me confidence, and no sign showed the presence of an enemy as I secured Henry's heavy overcoat and the large revolver he had given me, and we took our way down the stairs.

A short visit to the grimy, foul-smelling basement of the City Hall, a brisk walk with the cutting wind at our backs and I felt rather than saw that we were in the neighborhood of the scene of my adventures of a night that had come so near costing me my life, and then I saw the lantern sign give forth its promise of the varied entertainment that could be had at Borton's.

"Here we are," said Corson. We pushed open the door and entered. The place had the same appearance as the one to which I had been taken by Dicky Nahl.

"A fine night, Mother Borton," said Corson cheerily, as he was the first to enter, and then added under his breath,—"for the devil's business."

Mother Borton stared at him with a black look and muttered a curse. "Good evening," I hastened to say. "I took the liberty to bring a friend; he doesn't come as an officer to-night."

The effect on the hag's features was marvelous. The black scowl lightened, the tight-drawn lips relaxed, and there was a sign of pleasure in the bright eyes that had flashed hatred at the policeman.

"Ah, it's you, is it?" she said sharply, but with a tone of kindness in her greeting. "I didn't see ye. Now sit down and find a table, and I'll be with ye after a bit."

"We want a dinner, and a good one. I'm half-starved."

"Are ye, honey?" said the woman with delight. "Then it's the best dinner in town ye shall have. Here, Jim! Put these gentlemen over there at the corner table."

"It's not the aristocracy of stolle ye get here," said Corson, lighting his pipe after the coffee, "but it's prime eating."

I nodded in lazy contentment, and then started up in remembrance of the occasion of our being in this place as the shadow of Mother Borton fell across the table.

"If you will go upstairs," she said sourly. "You know the way. I guess your friend can spare you."

"Is there anything that can't be told before him?" I asked.

"You'll be safer in my care than in his," she said, with warning in her tone.

"Yes, yes, I know I am safe here, but how is it with my friend if I leave him here? We came together and we'll go together."

The crone nodded with a laugh that ended in a snarl.

"If the gang knew he was here there would be more fun than you saw the other night."

"Don't worry about me, Mr. Wilton," said Corson with a grin. "I've stood her crowd off before, and I can do it again if the need comes. But I'd rather smoke a pipe in peace."

"You can smoke in peace, but it's not yourself you can thank for it," said Mother Borton sharply. "There'll be no trouble here to-night. Come along." And the old woman started for the door.

"Are you sure you're all right?" asked Corson in a low voice. "There's men gone up those stairs that came down with a sheet over them."

"It's all right—that is, unless there's danger to you in leaving you here."

"No. Go ahead. I'll wait for ye. I'd as lief sit here as anywhere."

I hastened after Mother Borton, who was glowering at me from the doorway, and followed her footsteps in silence to the floor above.

Mother Borton walked the passage cautiously and in silence, and I followed her example until she pushed open a door and was swallowed up in the blackness. Then I paused on the threshold while she lighted a candle; and as I entered, she swiftly closed and locked the door behind me.

"Sit down," she said in a harsh voice, motioning me to a chair by the stand that held the candle. Then this strange creature seated herself in front of me, and looked steadily and sternly in my face for a full minute.

"What have you done that I should help you?" she broke forth in a harsh voice, her eyes still fixed on my face.

"I really couldn't say," I replied politely. "You have done me one or two services already. That's the best reason I know why you should do me another."

The hard lines on the face before me relaxed at the sound of my voice, and the old woman nodded approvingly.

"Ay, reason enough, I guess. Them as wants better can find it themselves. But why did you sneak out of the house the other night like a cop in plain clothes? Didn't I go bail you were safe? Do you want any better word than mine?" she had begun al-

most softly, but the voice grew higher and harsher as she went on.

"Why," I said, bewildered again, "the house sneaked away from me—or, at least you left me alone in it."

"How was that?" she asked grimly. And I described graphically my experience in the deserted building.

As I proceeded with my tale an amused look replaced the harsh lines of suspicion on Mother Borton's face.

"Oh, my lud!" she cried with a chuckle. "Oh, my lud! how very green you are, my boy. Oh ho! ho ho!" And then she laughed an inward, self-consuming laugh that called up anything but the feeling of sympathetic mirth.

"I'm glad it amuses you," I said with injured dignity.

"Oh, my liver! Don't you see it yet? Don't you see that you climbed into the next house back and went through on to the other street?" And she relapsed into her state of silent merriment.

I felt foolish enough as the truth flashed over me. I had lost my sense of direction in the strange house, and had been deceived by the resemblance of the ground plan of the two buildings.

"But what about the plot?" I asked. "I got your note. It's very interesting. What about it?"

"What plot?"

"Why, I don't know. The one you wrote me about."

Mother Borton bent forward and searched my face with her keen glance.

"Oh," she said at last, "the one I wrote you about. I'd forgotten it."

"This was disheartening. How could I depend on one whose memory was thus capricious?"

"Yes," said I gloomily; "I supposed you might know something about it."

"Show me the note," she said sharply.

I fumbled through my pockets until I found it. Mother Borton clutched it, held it up to the candle, and studied it for two or three minutes.

"Where did you get it?"

I described the circumstances in which it had come into my possession, and repeated the essentials of Cor-



"SHOW ME THE NOTE," SHE SAID SHARPLY.

son's story. Mother Borton's sharp, evil face was impassive during my recital. When it was done she muttered:

"Gimme a fool for luck." Then she appeared to consider for a minute or more.

"Well?" said I inquiringly.

"Well, honey, you're having a run of the cards," she said at last. "Between having the message trusted to a fool boy, and having a cop for your friend, an' maybe gitting this note before you're expected to, you're setting here genteel-like having agreeable conversation along with me, instead of being in company you mightn't like so well—or maybe floating out toward Fort Point."

"So you didn't write?" I said coolly. "I had an idea of the kind. That's why my friend Corson is smoking his pipe down stairs."

Mother Borton gave me a pleased look and nodded. I hoped I had made her regret the cruel insinuation in her application of the proverb to me as the favorite of fortune.

"I see," I said. "I was to be way-laid on the road here and killed."

"Carried off, more likely. I don't say as it wouldn't end in killin' ye. But, you see, you'd be of mighty small use in tellin' tales if you was dead; but you might be got to talk if they had ye in a quiet place."

"Good reasoning. But Henry Wilton was killed."

"Yes," admitted Mother Borton; "they thought he carried papers, and maybe they ain't got over the idea yet. It's jest as well you're here instid of having a little passcer with Tom Terrill and Darby Meeker and their pals."

"Well," said I, as cheerfully as I could under the depressing circumstances, "if they want to kill me, I don't see how I can keep them from getting a chance sooner or later."

Mother Borton looked anxious at this, and shook her head.

"You must call on your men," she said decidedly. "You must have guards."

"By the way," I said, "that reminds me. The men haven't been paid, and they're looking to me for money."

"Who's looking to you for money?"

"Dicky Nahl—and the others, I suppose."

"Dicky Nahl?"

"Why, yes. He asked me for it."

"And you gave it to him?" she asked sharply.

"No—that is, I gave him ten dollars and told him he'd have to wait for the rest. I haven't got the money from the one that's doing the hiring yet, so I couldn't pay him."

Mother Borton gave an evil grin, and absorbed another inward laugh.

"I reckon the money'll come all right," said Mother Borton, recovering from her mirth. "There's one more anxious than you to have 'em paid, and if you ain't found out you'll have it right away. Now for guards, take Trent—no, he's hurt. Take Brown and Porter and Barkhouse and Fitzhugh. They're wide-awake, and don't talk much. Take 'em two and two, and never go without 'em, night or day. You stop here to-night, and I'll git 'em for you to-morrow."

I declined the proffered hospitality with thanks, and as a compromise agreed to call for my bodyguard in the early morning. Rejoining Corson, I explained Mother Borton's theory of the plot that had brought me thither.

"She's like to be right," said the policeman. "She knows the gang. Now, if you'll take my advice, you'll let the rats have your room for this night, and come along up to some foine hotel."

The advice appeared good, and fifteen minutes later Corson was drinking my health at the Lick House bar, and calling on the powers of light and darkness to watch over my safety as I slept.

Whether due to his prayers or not, my sleep was undisturbed, even by dreams of Doddridge Knapp and his charming but scornful daughter; and with the full tide of life and business flowing through the street in the morning hours I found myself once more in Mother Borton's dingy eating-room, ordering a breakfast.

Mother Borton ignored my entrance, and, perched on a high stool behind the bar and cash-drawer, reminded me of the vulture guarding its prey. But at last she fluttered over to my table and took a seat opposite.

"Your men are here," she said shortly. And then, as I expressed my thanks, she warmed up and gave me a description by which I should know each and led me to the room where, as she said, they were "corralled."

"By the way," I said, halting outside the door, "they'll want some money, I suppose. Do you know how much?"

"They're paid," she said, and pushed open the door before I could express surprise or ask further questions. I surmised that she had paid them herself to save me from annoyance or possible danger, and my gratitude to this strange creature rose still higher.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### WORLD CENSUS OF JEWS.

Only Two Countries Have Greater Number Than America.

In the American Jewish Year Book, just issued by the Jewish Publication society of Philadelphia, the Jewish population of the United States is given as 1,777,185. Only two countries have a greater Jewish population, Russia, with 5,215,805, and Austria-Hungary, with 2,076,387. The immigration through the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore for the year ended June 30, 1907, was 134,113. The Jewish population of the United States is larger by 531 than the combined Jewish population of the British empire, Germany, France, Italy, Morocco, Turkey, Spain, China, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Peru and Crete. The British empire has only 361,639 Jews, of whom 17,403 are in Australia, 18,228 in India, 48,820 in South Africa and 40,000 in Canada and British Columbia. There are 463,686 Jews in Turkey, 30,578 in Egypt and 49,500 in Persia. In these three countries there are about 100,000 fewer than there are in New York city. The Jewish population of the world is given as 11,585,202.—American Jewish Year Book.

#### A Hurdy-Gurdy Romance.

The day was sunny and warm. The shade of an oak tree overhanging a board fence offered grateful shelter to the old woman who wheeled a hurdy-gurdy slowly down the street. Leaving the organ at the curbstone, the woman seated herself on the ground close to the fence, untied a red bandanna, from which she produced a luncheon not over dainty or appetizing in appearance, spread out a newspaper, and set forth the meal, evidently expecting some one else.

The old hurdy-gurdy man soon joined her, bringing with him the pail of beer for which he had stopped on the avenue. He was brown and wrinkled and grimy like herself; but before beginning the meal he bent down and kissed the old woman, as if observing a sacrament.

And life seemed suddenly purer and sweeter to the passerby.—N. Y. Press.

Knicker—Edison says four hours' sleep is enough for everybody.

Bocker—It would be if you could take it after it is time to get up.—New York Sun.

#### Domestic Pleasantries.

"I hear Mrs. Strallface is opposed to all sorts of society functions and entertaining."

"She is. She is so narrow-minded that she wouldn't even entertain an idea."—Baltimore American.

#### Laughing Gas.

"I see," observed the delegate with the retreating hair, "that Texas has sent Taft a present of a pair of wool trousers."

"Yes," commented the delegate with the ingraving chin, "all wool—and a yard wide."—Chicago Tribune.

#### IN THE LITERARY WORLD.

One of the really important events of the literary world this season was the appearance of Winston Churchill's new novel "Mr. Crew's Career." In this work Mr. Churchill has more than sustained his previous well-earned reputation. It is dedicated "To the men who in every state of the union are engaged in the struggle for purer politics." From this it is seen that the story deals with an intensely interesting topic, and it is a vigorous, dramatic, entertaining recital of a subject in which every person is concerned. The locale of the story makes it a natural sequel to "Coniston," although the time is the present.

That Thomas McKean, the young Philadelphia author, has made much progress in the world of letters in his second novel, "The Master Influence," published this spring by the Lippincotts, is evidenced by the many serious and appreciative reviews accorded the book. Its steady and increasing sales show that the writer has already won a large following. Mr. McKean is spending the summer abroad, engaged upon another novel. He says he has not gone to Europe entirely for material, however, as his own country is a rich enough field to furnish any number of interesting plots.

A thrilling escape from New Orleans, of a party of three, followed by a series of singular experiences among a tribe of Indians, make up the core of Randall Parrish's new romance, "Prisoners of Chance," just published by A. C. McClurg & Co. Around this are woven the mystery of the queen of the aborigines, a woman with sunlit hair who bends the savages to her slightest whim, the plottings and counterplottings in the French-Spanish city at the mouth of the Mississippi, the dangers and fighting of the long journey up the river with an eager enemy close behind, the self-sacrifice and martyrdom of a missionary, and the common sense and presence of mind of an American pioneer of the most robust type. The result is a story filled with thrills and excitements, in Mr. Parrish's most inventive vein.

#### Impoliteness.

A enormous dog came in one day, And he and I commenced to play; And we had fun, and nice fun, too, Long as he 'aved as a dog should do. But when he got so awful rough I hollered that I'd had enough, But 'stead of stopping as he should, As anybody'd think he would, He knocked me down and tried to see If he could sit on all of me. (From Our Baby Book, by Fanny Y. Cory.)

### Lincoln Directory

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