

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 circumstances cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. 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. He leaves the morgue with a woman whom he is charged with secreting and protecting. 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 Barton 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. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is stricken by the beauty of Luella, his daughter. Slumming tour through Chinatown is planned. The trip to Chinatown, Giles Dudley learns that the party is being shadowed by Terrill. Luella and Dudley are cut off from the rest of the party and imprisoned in a hallway behind an iron-bound door. Three Chinese ruffians approach the imprisoned couple. A battle ensues. One is knocked down. Giles begins firing. Tim Terrill is seen in the mob. A newly formed mob is checked by shots from Giles' revolver. Policeman Corson breaks down the door with an ax and the couple is rescued. Luella thanks Giles Dudley for saving her life. Knapp appears at the office with no traces of the previous night's debauch. Following his instructions Dudley has a notable day in the Stock Exchange, selling Crown Diamond and buying Omega, the object being to crush Decker, Knapp's hated rival. Dudley discovers that he loves Luella Knapp. Mother Barton tells Giles Dudley that they've discovered where "the boy" is. The mysterious unknown woman employer of Dudley meets him by appointment with "the boy" who is turned over to Dudley with his guards and they drive with him to the ferry boat to take a train out of the city. Dudley and his faithful guards convey "the boy" by train to the village of Livermore, as per the written instructions. The party is followed. Soon after the party is quartered in the hotel a special train arrives in Livermore. The "gang," including Darby Meeker and Tim Terrill, lay siege to the hotel and endeavor to capture "the boy." Tricked again, cries Tim Terrill, when he sees the youngster's face. "It's the wrong boy." Dudley and Terrill meet in battle of man to man. Dudley is knocked unconscious by Terrill's assistant and awakes to find himself in a hotel room under care of his guards. The hotel is guarded by Terrill's men who are instructed to kill the first man who tries to escape. Dudley gives the note to the only man. The boy is left behind and Dudley and his remaining guards make their escape by horseback and by stealing a locomotive. Doddridge Knapp and Decker meet face to face on the stock exchange. Decker is defeated. Dudley and Knapp prevent a coup to control the directors and declare Knapp's stock invalid. Mother Barton is mortally wounded and dies before she can tell Dudley the secret of his strange mission.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Continued.

In the matter of description the enemy had the advantage, slight as it was.

"Third road—cockeyed barn—iron cow," and the confused jumble of drunken letters and figures that Henry had written—I could make nothing of these. "From B—follow 1 1/2 m. Take third road—3 or 5"—this was at least half-intelligible.

Then it came to me like a blow—was this the mysterious "key" that the Unknown had demanded of me in her letter of this morning? I was roused from my reverie of fears by confused shouts from down the hall, and sprang hastily to the door, with the thought that the forces of the enemy were upon us.

"Here he is! they've found him," cried an excited voice.

"Yes, sir! here he comes!"

It was truly the stalwart guard; but two days had made a sad change in him. With head bound in a bloody rag, and face of a waxy yellow hue, he staggered limply out of one of the rear rooms between Corson and Owens.

Barkhouse was soon propped up on the lounge in the guardroom, and with a few sips of whisky and a fresh bandage began to look like a more hopeful case.

"Now, we must get out of here," I said. "Take turns by twos in helping Barkhouse. We had better not risk staying here."

"Right," said Corson; "and now we'll just take these three beauties along to the station."

The men swore at this, but as their hands were bound behind them, and Corson walked with his club in one hand and his pistol in the other, they took up the march at command and the rest of us slowly followed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Chase in the Storm.

When we reached the entrance to our quarters on Montgomery street the rain had once more begun to fall, gently now, but the gusts of damp wind from the south promised more and worse to follow.

"A message for you, Mr. Wilton," said a voice suddenly from the recess of the doorway.

"Give it to me," I said.

A slip of paper was thrust into my hand, and I passed up the stairs.

"I'll wait for you," said the messenger, and at the first gas jet that burned at the head of the stairs I stopped to read the address.

It was in the hand of the Unknown, and my fatigue and indifference were gone in a moment. I trembled as I tore open the envelope and read:

"Follow the bearer of this note at 12:30. Come alone and armed. It is important."

There was no signature.

If it meant anything it meant that I was to meet the Unknown, and perhaps to search the heart of the mystery. I had been heavy with fatigue and drowsy with want of sleep, but at this thought the energies of life were once more fresh within me.

The men had waited a minute for me as I read the note.

"Go to your rooms and get some rest," I said. "I am called away. Trent will be in charge, and I will send word to him if I need any of you."

They looked at me in blank protest.

"You're not going alone, sir?" cried Owens in a tone of alarm.

"Oh, no. But I shall not need a guard," I hoped heartily that I did not.

The men shook their heads doubtfully, and I continued:

"Corson will be down from the Central station in 15 or 20 minutes. Just tell him I've been sent for and to come to-morrow if he can make it in his way."

And bidding them good night I ran hastily down the stairs before any of the men could frame his protest into words.

"Are you ready, sir?" asked the messenger.

"It is close on half-past twelve," I answered. "Where is she?"

"It's not far away," said my guide evasively.

I understood the danger of speech and did not press for an answer.

We plunged down Montgomery street in the teeth of the wind that dashed the spray in our faces at one moment, lulled an instant the better to deceive the unwary and then leaped at us from behind corners with the impetuous rush of some great animal that turned to vapor as it reached us. The street was dark except for the newspaper offices, which glowed bright with lights on both sides of the way, busy with the only signs of life that the storm and the midnight hour had left.

With the lighted buildings behind us we turned down California street. Half-way down the block, in front of the Merchants' Exchange, stood a hack. At the sight my heart beat fast and my breath came quick.

As we neared the hack my guide gave a short, suppressed whistle, and passing before me, flung open the door to the vehicle and motioned me to enter. I had gone too far to retreat, and stepped into the hack. Instead of following, the guide closed the door gently; I heard him mount the seat with the driver, and in a moment we were in motion.

Was I alone? I had expected to find the Unknown, but the dark interior gave no sign of a companion. A slight movement made me certain that some one sat in the father corner of the carriage. The situation became a little embarrassing. Was it my place to speak first? I wondered. At last I could endure the silence no longer.

"Quite an unpleasant evening," I remarked politely.

There was a rustle of movement, the sound of a short gasp, and a soft, mournful voice broke on my ear.

"Mr. Dudley—can you forgive me?"

The astonishment I felt to hear my own name once more—the name that seemed now to belong to a former state of existence—was swallowed up as the magnetic tones carried their revelation to my mind. I was stricken dumb for a moment at the discovery they had brought. Then I gasped:

"Mrs. Knapp!"

"Yes, Mrs. Knapp," she said with a mournful laugh. "Did you never suspect?"

I was lost in wonder and confusion, and even yet could not understand.

"What brings you out in this storm?" I asked, completely mystified. "I thought I was to meet another person."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Knapp, with a spark of animation. "Well, I am the other person."

"You!" I exclaimed at last. "Are you the protector of the boy? The employer—" Then I stopped, the tangle in mind beginning to straighten out.

"I am she," said Mrs. Knapp gently. "Then," I cried, "who is he? What is he? What is the whole dreadful affair about? and what—"

Mrs. Knapp interrupted me.

"First tell me what has become

of Henry Wilton?" she said with sorrow in her voice.

The dreadful scene in the alley flashed before my mind.

"He is dead."

"Dead! And how?"

"Murdered."

"I feared so—I was certain, or he would have let me know. You have much to tell me. But first, did he leave no papers in your hands?"

"He brought out the slip that bore the blind diagram and the blinder description that accompanied it. Nothing could be made of it in the darkness, so I described it as well as I could."

"We are on the right track," said Mrs. Knapp. "Oh, why didn't I have that yesterday? But here—we are at the wharf."

My guide was before us, and we followed him down the pier, struggling against the gusts.

"Do we cross the bay?" I asked, as Mrs. Knapp clung to my arm. "It's not safe for you in a small boat."

"There's a tug waiting for us," Mrs. Knapp explained.

A moment later we saw its lights, and the fire of its engine room shot a cheerful glow into the storm. The little vessel swung uneasily at its berth as we made our way aboard, and with shouts of men and clang of bells it was soon tossing on the dark waters of the bay.

The cabin of the tug was fitted with a shelf-table, and over it swung a lamp of brass that gave a dim light to the little room. Mrs. Knapp seated



herself here, spread out the paper I had given her and studied the diagram and the jumble of letters with anxious attention.

"It is the same," she said at last; "in part, at least."

"The same as what?" I asked.

"As the one I got word of to-night, you know," she replied.

"But," she continued, "this gives a different place. I was to go to the cross-road here"—indicating the mark at the last branch.

"I'm glad to hear that," said I, taking out the diagram I had found in the citadel of the enemy. "This seems to point to a different place, too, and I really hope that the gentleman who drew this map is a good way off from the truth."

"Where did you get this?" exclaimed Mrs. Knapp.

I described the circumstances in as few words as I could command.

"They are ahead of us," she said in alarm.

"They have started first, I suppose," was my suggestion.

And they have the right road."

"Then our only hope is that they may not know the right place."

"God grant it," said Mrs. Knapp.

She was silent for a few minutes, and I saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Then she said, 'Now tell me about Henry Wilton—how he died and when.'

I told the tale as it had happened, and as I told it I read in the face before me the varying emotions of alarm, horror and grief that were stirred by its incidents. But one thing I could not tell her. The wolf-face I had seen in the lantern flash in the alley I could not name nor describe to the wife of Doddridge Knapp.

Mrs. Knapp bowed her head in deep, gloomy thought.

"I feared it, yet he would not listen to my warnings," she murmured. "He would work his own way." Then she looked me suddenly straight in the face.

"And why did you take his place, his name? Why did you try to do his work when you had seen the dreadful end to which it had brought him?"

I confessed that it was half through the insistence of Detective Coogan that I was Henry Wilton, half through the course of events that seemed to make it the easiest road to reach the vengeance that I had vowed to bring the murderer of my friend.

"You are bent on avenging him?" asked Mrs. Knapp thoughtfully.

"I have promised it."

"I have marveled at you," said Mrs.

Knapp after a pause. "I marvel at you yet. You have carried off your part well."

"Not well enough, it seems, to deceive you," I said, a little bitterly.

"You should not have expected to deceive me," said Mrs. Knapp. "But you can imagine the shock I had when I saw that it was not Henry Wilton who had come among us that first night when I called you from Mr. Knapp's room."

"You certainly succeeded in concealing any surprise you may have felt," I said. "You are a better actor than I."

Mrs. Knapp smiled.

"It was more than surprise—it was consternation," she said. "I had been anxious at receiving no word from Henry. I suppose you got my notes. And when I saw you I was torn with doubts, wondering whether anything had happened to Henry."

"I didn't suppose I was quite so poor an imposter," I said apologetically, with a quash at the word. "Though I did get some hint of it," I added, with a painful recollection of the caudal statement of opinion I had received from the daughter of the house.

"Oh, you did very well," said Mrs. Knapp kindly, "but no one could have been successful in that house. Luella was quite outraged over it, but I managed to quiet her."

"I hope Miss Knapp has not retained the unfavorable impressions of—er—" I stammered in much confusion.

Mrs. Knapp gave me a keen glance.

"You know she has not," she said.

"Well," continued Mrs. Knapp, "when I saw you and guessed that something had happened to Henry Wilton, and found that you knew little of what was going on, I changed the plan of campaign. I did not know that you were one to be trusted, but I saw that you could be used to keep the others on a false scent, for you deceived everybody but us."

"I would have spoken when I found you for what you are," said Mrs. Knapp, "but I thought until the Livermore trip that you could serve me best as you were doing."

"It was blind work," I said.

"It was blind enough for you, not for me. I was deceived in one thing, however; I thought that you had no papers—nothing from Henry that could help or hurt. The first night you came to us I had Henry's room thoroughly searched."

"Oh, I was indebted to you for that attention," I exclaimed. "I gave our friends of the other house the credit."

Mrs. Knapp smiled again.

"I thought it necessary. It was the chance that you did not sleep there that night that kept this paper out of my hands weeks ago."

"I have always kept it with me," I said.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SEEN AT CARTHAGE MUSEUM.

Fine Specimens of Sarcophagi Were Found by Rev. P. Delattre.

Among the most recent finds which have been made at Carthage by the Rev. P. Delattre are a number of sarcophagi which present a great interest. In many of these, says the Scientific American, the top cover is sculptured in relief with a figure of life size, carved out of marble and painted in many colors. One very fine specimen was found in the necropolis at a depth of 25 feet. On the cover is a figure of a woman executed in the Greek style, with a long garment reaching the ankles and a veil covering the head. Great technical skill is shown in treating the different tissues. The flesh parts are well polished, and the eyes are painted, giving a lifelike aspect. The hair is gilded. Inside the sarcophagus were found the remains of the person, with some bronze objects. A second sarcophagus was that of a person supposed to be a priest. The sculptured figure has abundant hair and a curling beard. It wears a long robe with short sleeve. Here also the eyes are painted, and are very expressive.

Among the remains are a massive gold ring with a portrait similar to the above, also three other gold rings, amulets, etc. One of the most recent finds was a sarcophagus with the sculptured figure of a woman wearing a long tunic of fine wool of a pinkish hue, with a gilded belt passing under the breast. The lower part of the body is enveloped in what appears to be two great vultures' wings, according to the Egyptian style. The whole figure bears traces of painting and gilding. As to the remains, they are imbedded in a resinous matter, as is often seen. M. Delattre examined the specimens carefully to observe the painting before they came up to daylight, as the colors faded almost at once, and he found the color and gilding to be quite brilliant both on the figures and on the moldings of the sarcophagi. These specimens form an important addition to the Carthage museum.

Beyond Her Understanding.

It is impossible for any woman to understand how a man can have so much money that he doesn't know what to do with it.

I AM A MOTHER



How many American women in lonely homes to-day long for this blessing to come into their lives, and to be able to utter these words, but because of some organic derangement this happiness is denied them. Every woman interested in this subject should know that preparation for healthy maternity is accomplished by the use of **LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND**. Mrs. Maggie Gilmer, of West Union, S. C., writes to Mrs. Pinkham: "I was greatly run-down in health from a weakness peculiar to my sex, when Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound was recommended to me. It not only restored me to perfect health, but to my delight I am a mother."

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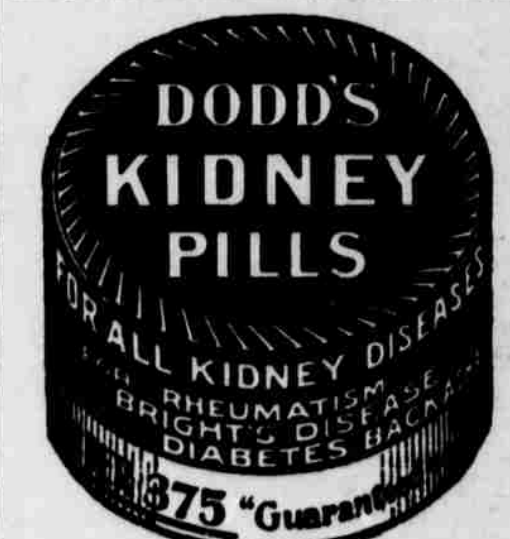
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