

BLIND-FOLDED

By EARLE ASHLEY WILCOFF

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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 nature. 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" Nahl, the supposed Wilton, is further taken to Mother Horton's, where Mother Horton discovers that he is not Wilton. The lights are turned out and a free for all fight follows. Giles Dudley finds himself locked in a room. He escapes through a window. The supposed Wilton carries off his dead friend's work with Doddridge Knapp. He has his first experience as a capitalist in the Board Room of the Stock Exchange.

CHAPTER X.

A Tangle of Schemes.

Doddridge Knapp was seated calmly in my office when I opened the door. There was a grim smile about the firm jaws, and a satisfied glitter in the keen eyes. The Wolf had found his prey, and the dismay of the sheep at the sight of his fangs gave him satisfaction instead of distress. The King of the Street honored me with a royal nod. "There seems to have been a little surprise for somebody on the Board this morning," he suggested. "I heard something about it on the street," I admitted. "It was a good plan and worked well. Let me see your memoranda of purchases." I gave him my slips. He looked over them with growing perplexity in his face. "Here's twelve thousand five hundred shares of Omega." "Yes." "You paid too much for that first lot." He was still poring over the list. "It's easier to see that now than then," I suggested dryly. "Humph! yes. But there's something wrong here." He was comparing my list with another in his hand. "There!" I thought; "my confounded ignorance has made a mess of it." But I spoke with all the confidence I could assume: "What's the matter, now?" "Eleven thousand and twelve thousand five hundred make twenty-three thousand five hundred; and here are sales of Omega this morning of thirty-three thousand eight hundred and thirty." He seemed to be talking more to himself than to me, and to be far from pleased. "How's that? I don't understand." I was all in the dark over his mustangs. "I picked up eleven thousand shares in the other Boards this morning, and twelve thousand five hundred through you, but somebody has taken in the other ten thousand." The King of the Street seemed puzzled and, I thought, a little worried. "Well, you got over twenty-three thousand shares," I suggested consolingly. "That's a pretty good morning's work."

The King of the Street gave me a contemptuous glance. "Don't be a fool, Wilton. I sold ten thousand of those shares to myself." A new light broke upon me. I was getting lessons of one of the many ways in which the market was manipulated. "Then you think that somebody else—" The King of the Street broke in with a grim smile. "Never mind what I think. I've got the contract for doing the thinking for this job, and I reckon I can 'tend to it.'" The great speculator was silent for a few moments. "I might as well be frank with you," he said at last. "You'll have to know something to work intelligently. I must get control of the Omega Company, and to do it I've got to have more stock. I've been afraid of a combination against me, and I guess I've struck it. I can't be sure yet, but when those ten thousand shares were gobbled up on a panicky market, I'll bet there's something up." "Who is it?" I asked politely. "They've kept themselves covered," said the King of the Street, "but I'll have them out in the open before the end. And then, my boy, you'll see the fur fly."

stealthily tread, and the door closed softly behind him. I wondered idly who Doddridge Knapp's visitor might be, but as I could see no way of finding out, and felt no special concern over his identity or purposes, I rose and left the office. As I stepped into the hall I discovered that somebody had a deeper curiosity than I. A man was stooping to the keyhole of Doddridge Knapp's room in the endeavor to see or hear. As he heard the sound of my opening the door he started up, and with a bound, was around the turn of the hall and pattering down the stairs. In another bound I was after him. I had seen his form for but a second, and his face not at all. But in that second I knew him for Tim Terrill of the snake-eyes and the murderous purpose. When I reached the head of the stairs he was nowhere to be seen, but I heard the patter of his feet below and plunged down three steps at a time and into Clay street, nearly upsetting a stout gentleman in my haste. The street was busy with people, but no sign of the snake-eyed man greeted me. Much disturbed in mind at this apparition of my enemy, I sought in vain for some explanation of his presence. Was he spying on Doddridge Knapp? What treachery was he shaping in his designs on the man whose bread he was eating and whose plans of crime he was the chief agent to assist or execute? I was roused by a man bumping into me roughly. I suspected that he had done it on purpose, and started by him briskly, when he spoke in a low tone:

"You'd better go to your room, Mr. Wilton." He said something more that I did not catch, and, reeling on, disappeared in the crowd before I could turn to mark or question him. I thought at first that he meant the room I had just left. Then it occurred to me that it was the room Henry had occupied—the room in which I had spent my first dreadful night in San Francisco, and had not revisited in the thirty hours since I had left it. The advice suited by inclination, and in a few minutes I was entering the dingy building and climbing the worn and creaking stairs. The place lost its air of mystery in the broad sunshine and penetrating daylight, and though its interior was as gloomy as ever, it lacked the haunting suggestions it had borrowed from darkness and the night. Slipped under the door I found two notes. One was from Detective Coogan, and read: "Inquest this afternoon. Don't want you. Have another story. Do you want the body?" The other was in a woman's hand, and the faint perfume of the first note I had received rose from the sheet. It read: "I do not understand your silence. The money is ready. What is the matter?" The officer's note was easy enough to answer. I found paper, and, assuring Detective Coogan of my gratitude at escaping the inquest, I asked him to turn the body over to the undertaker to be buried at my order. The other note was more perplexing. I could make nothing of it. It was evidently from my unknown employer, and her anxiety was plain to see. But I was no nearer to finding her than before, and if I knew how to reach her I knew not what to say. As I was contemplating this state of affairs with some dejection, and sealing my melancholy note to Detective Coogan, there was a quick step in the hall and a rap at the panel. It was a single person, so I had no hesitation in opening the door, but it gave me a passing



"SELL EVERYTHING YOU BOUGHT—NEVER ORDER THE PRICE—OTHER ORDERS OFF." D. K.

and I believed, moreover, that he had no idea where I might be at the present moment. "It's all right, sonny," I said. "Trot along." "Where's yer letter?" asked the boy, loyally anxious to earn his quarter. "It won't have to go now," I said coolly. I believed that the boy meant no harm to me, but I was not taking any risks. The boy sauntered down the hall. "Well, I must look like a sucker if they think I can be taken in by a trick like that," was my mental comment. I charged the scheme up to my snake-eyed friend and had a poorer opinion of his intelligence than I had hitherto entertained. Yet I was astonished that he should, even with the most hearty wish to bring about my downfall, contrive a plan that would inflict a heavy loss on his employer and possibly ruin him altogether. There was more beneath than I could fathom. My brain refused to work in the maze of contradictions and mysteries, plots and counterplots, in which I was involved. I took my way at last toward the market, and, halting a boy to whom I intrusted my letter to Detective Coogan, walked briskly to Pine street.

CHAPTER XI.

The Den of the Wolf.

The street had changed its appearance in the two or three hours since I had made my way from the Exchange through the pallid, panic-stricken mob. There were still thousands of people between the corner of Montgomery Street and Leidesdorff, and the little alley itself was packed full of shouting, struggling traders. But there was an air of confidence, almost of buoyancy, in place of the gloom and terror that had lowered over the street at noon. Plainly the panic was over, and men were inspired by a belief that "stocks were going up." I made a few dispositions accordingly. Taking Doddridge Knapp's hint I engaged another broker as a relief to Eppner, a short fat man, with the bald head I ever saw, a black beard and a hook-nose, whose remarkable activity and scattering charges had attracted my attention in the morning session. Wallbridge was his name, I found, and he proved to be as intelligent as I could wish—a merry little man, with a joke for all things, and a flow of words that was almost overwhelming. "Omega? Yes," chuckled the stout little broker, after he had assured himself of my financial standing. "But you ought to have bought this morning, if that's what you want. It was hell popping and the roof giving 'way all at once." The little man had an abundant stock of profanity which he used unconsciously and with such original variations that one almost forgot the blasphemy of it while listening to him. "You ought to have been there," he continued, "and watched the boys shell 'em out!" "Yes, I heard you had lively times," "Boiling," he said with coruscating additions in the way of speech and gesture. "If it hadn't been for Decker and some fellow we hadn't had a chance to make out yet the bottom of the market would have been resting on the roof of the lower regions." The little man's remark was slightly more direct and forcible, but this will do for a revised version. "Decker!" I exclaimed, pricking up my ears. "I thought he had quit the market." "As I had never heard of Mr. Decker before that moment this was not exactly the truth, but I thought it would serve me better. "Decker out of it!" gasped Wallbridge, his bald head positively glistening at the absurdity of the idea. "He'll be out of it when he's carried out." "I meant out of Omega. Is he getting up a deal?" The little broker looked vexed, as though it crossed his mind that he had said too much. "Oh, no. Guess not. Don't think he is," he said rapidly. "Just wanted to save the market, I guess. If Omega had gone five points lower there would have been the sickest times in the Street that we've seen since the Bank of California closed and the shop across the way"—pointing his thumb at the Exchange—"had to be shut up. But maybe it wasn't Decker, you know. That's just what was rumored on the Street, you know." I suspected that my little broker knew more than he was willing to tell, but I forbore to press him further, and gave him the order to buy all the Omega stock he could pick up under fifty.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Abstemiousness Pays. The future is to the people who are strictly sober. The Japanese, officers and soldiers, fed on rice, and during the great war from which they issued victorious had only water to appease their thirst.—Henri Rochefort in L'Intransigeant.

She Knew the Place. The elderly matron with the bundles, who was journeying to a point in Wisconsin, and occupied a seat near the middle of the car, had fallen asleep. On the seat in front of her sat a little boy. The brakeman opened the door of the car and called out the name of the station the train was approaching. The elderly woman roused herself with a jerk. "Where are we now, Bobby?" she asked. "I don't know, grandma," answered the little boy. "Didn't the brakeman say something just now?" "No. He just stuck his head inside the door and sneezed." "Help me with these things, Bobby!" she exclaimed, hurriedly. "This is Oshkosh. It's where we get off."—Youth's Companion.

Cause for Thanks? It was at a social gathering of one of the mutual improvement societies which help to pass the shining (or otherwise) hour in an edifying manner.

A little slinging was to be indulged in by some of the members, and about half-way down the program the name of Miss Molemy-Brown figured. Alas, however, when the time came for her to appear a messenger arrived to say that the lady was suffering from a cold, and, therefore, the chairman had to excuse her to the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have to announce that Miss Brown will be unable to sing, as announced, and, therefore, Mr. Green will give us 'A Song of Thanksgiving.'"—Stray Stories.

What, Indeed! Tompkins is one of the people who has taken up the phrase, "What do you know about that?" The other afternoon his beautiful stenographer laid down her paper and said:

"I agree with Olga Netherale in the opinion that it is better to be a mother than to have a career." "Well," exclaimed Tompkins, "what do you know about that?"

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Not Recorded. Bill—Did they record that politician's speech? Jill—I believe not. They hadn't a wind gauge, I believe.—Yonkers Statesman.

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