

BLIND-FOLDED

By EARLE ASHLEY WILCOTT

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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 instructions to wait for him and to shoot any one who tries to enter. Outside there is heard shouting 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 "Hello," 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 then, with a gasp, he discovers that he is not Wilton. The lights are turned out and a 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 Ferrill 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 forger of which he readily detects. Dudley gets his first knowledge of a Decker, who is Knapp's enemy on the Board. The forged note mystifies Knapp. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is attracted 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 despised. 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 meaning 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."

"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—spendulicks—you know? Yesterday was pay-day, but you didn't show up."

I said not, but whether my jaw dropped or not. My spirits certainly did.

"By Jove, Dicky!" I exclaimed, catching my breath. "I 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 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."

Dicky gave me a wince 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 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 your life is wurth savin."
"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—"



HAZY.

Publisher—The third chapter in this manuscript is so blurred I can't make it out.

Author—Yes; that is where I used London atmosphere. That is the fog, you know.

Swadeshi.

In the sense in which Sir William Harcourt remarked "We are all socialists now," it may be said that all Anglo-Indians are believers in Swadeshi. While all reasonable Anglo-Indians deplore the senseless agitation and the unsound economics of the extremist advocates of Swadeshi principles, they are all anxious to assist that natural development of indigenous industries and the creation of new ones upon which the future prosperity of the country so largely depends.—Pioneer Mail.

Sheer white goods, in fact, any fine wash goods when new, owe much of their attractiveness to the way they are laundered, this being done in a manner to enhance their textile beauty. Home laundering would be equally satisfactory if proper attention was given to starching, the first essential being good Starch, which has sufficient strength to stiffen, without thickening the goods. Try Defiance Starch and you will be pleasantly surprised at the improved appearance of your work.

Things That Trip.

"It's a fact," said the man who was given to moralizing, "that one cannot be too careful about trifles. Some times when a man's going along planning some big things some little thing that he's overlooked trips him up."

"Yes," the plain man agreed, "and there should be a law against throwing banana skins on the pavement."

An Effective Hint.

"She won't ask directly for wine, but when she is where it is, she always pretends to be taken with great suffering."

"I see; an all around case of sham pain."

You always get full value in Lewis' Single Binder straight 5c cigar. Your dealer or Lewis' Factory, Peoria, Ill.

Don't forget that a thing isn't done because you intend to do it.

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May be permanently overcome by proper personal efforts with the assistance of the one truly beneficial laxative remedy, Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna, which enables one to form regular habits daily so that assistance to nature may be gradually dispensed with when no longer needed as the best of remedies, when required, are to assist nature and not to supplant the natural functions, which must depend ultimately upon proper nourishment, proper efforts, and right living generally. To get its beneficial effects, always buy the genuine

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Miss Lillian Ross, 530 East 84th Street, New York, writes: "Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound overcame irregularities, periodic suffering, and nervous headaches, after everything else had failed to help me, and I feel it a duty to let others know of it." Katharine Craig, 2385 Lafayette St., Denver, Col., writes: "Thanks to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I am well, after suffering for months from nervous prostration." Miss Marie Stoltzman, of Laurel, Ia., writes: "I was in a run-down condition and suffered from suppression, indigestion, and poor circulation. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound made me well and strong." Miss Ellen M. Olson, of 417 N. East St., Kewanee, Ill., says: "Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound cured me of backache, sideache, and established my periods, after the best local doctors had failed to help me."

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Positively cured by these Little Pills.
They also relieve Distress from Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Too Hearty Eating. A perfect remedy for Dizziness, Nausea, Drowsiness, Bad Taste in the Mouth, Coated Tongue, Pain in the Side, TORPID LIVER, etc. Beware of cheap imitations. They regulate the Bowels. Purely Vegetable.

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Refuse Substitutes.

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England's Dog Population.
It is estimated that there are 2,500,000 dogs in Great Britain.