



INITIALS ONLY

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"THE FILIGREE DALL" "THE HOUSE OF THE WHISPERING PINES"
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SYNOPSIS.

George Anderson and wife see a remarkable looking man come out of the Clermont hotel, look around furtively, wash his hands in the snow and pass on. Commotion attracts them to the Clermont, where it is found that the beautiful Miss Edith Chalonier has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man he saw washing his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians find that Miss Chalonier was stabbed and not shot, which seems to clear Brotherson of suspicion. Brotherson, an aged detective, and Sweetwater, his assistant, take up the case. They believe Miss Chalonier stabbed herself. A paper cutter found near the scene of tragedy is believed to be the weapon used. Mr. Chalonier feels a batch of letters found in his daughter's desk, signed "D. B." All are love letters except one which shows that the writer was displeased. This letter was signed by Orlando Brotherson. Anderson goes with Sweetwater to identify Brotherson, who is to address a meeting of anarchists. The place is raided by the police and Brotherson escapes without being identified. Brotherson is found living in a tenement under the name of Dunn. He is an inventor. Brotherson tells the coroner of his acquaintance with Miss Chalonier and how she repulsed him with scorn when he offered her his love. Sweetwater recalls the mystery of the murder of a washerwoman in which some details were similar to the Chalonier affair. Chalonier admits his daughter was deeply interested in not in love with Brotherson. Brotherson gives the police a plausible explanation of his conduct. Sweetwater plans to disguise himself as a carpenter and seek lodgings in the same building with Brotherson. He watches the inventor at work at night and is detected by the latter. The detective moves to a room adjoining Brotherson's. He secretes a hole in the wall to spy on Brotherson. He visits him and assists the inventor in his work.

CHAPTER XVIII.

What Am I to Do Now?

Early morning saw Sweetwater peering into the depths of his closet. The hole was hardly visible. This meant that the book he had pushed across it from the other side had not been removed.

Mr. Brotherson's bed was in a remote corner from the loop-hole made by Sweetwater; but in the stillness now pervading the whole building, the latter could hear his even breathing very distinctly. He was in a deep sleep.

The young detective's moment had come.

Ticking from his breast a small box, he placed it on a shelf close against the partition. An instant of quiet listening, then he touched a spring in the side of the box and laid his ear, in haste, to his loop-hole.

A strain of well-known music broke softly from the box and sent its vibrations through the wall.

It was answered instantly by a stir within; then, as the music continued, awakening memories of that fatal instant when it crashed through the corridors of the Hotel Clermont, drowning Miss Chalonier's cry in the sound of her fall, a word burst from the sleeping man's lips which carried its own message to the listening detective.

It was Edith! Miss Chalonier's first name, and the tone bespoke a shaken soul.

Sweetwater, gasping with excitement, caught the box from the shelf and silenced it. It had done its work and it was no part of Sweetwater's plan to have this strain located, or even to be thought real. But its echo still lingered in Brotherson's otherwise unconscious ears; for another "Edith!" escaped his lips, followed by a smothered but forceful utterance of these words, "You know I promised you—"

Promised her what? He did not say. Would he have done so had the music lasted a trifle longer? Would he yet complete his sentence? Sweetwater trembled with eagerness and listened breathlessly for the next sound. Brotherson was awake. He was tossing in his bed. Now he has leaped to the floor. Sweetwater hears him groan, then comes another silence, broken at last by the sound of his body falling back upon the bed and the troubled ejaculation of "Good God!" wrung from lips no torture could have forced into complaint under any daytime conditions.

Sweetwater continued to listen, but he had heard all, and after some few minutes longer of fruitless waiting, he withdrew from his post. The episode was over. He would hear no more that night.

Was he satisfied? Sweetwater imagined the scene—saw the figure of Brotherson hesitating at the top of the stairs—saw him advancing from the writing room, with startled and uplifted hand—heard the music—the crash of that great trunk—and decided, without hesitation, that the words he had just heard were indeed the thoughts of that moment. "Edith, you know I promised you—"

What had he promised? What she received was death! Had this been in his mind? Would this have been the termination of the sentence had he wakened less soon to consciousness and caution?

Sweetwater dared to believe it.

Could it be? Was it he who was dreaming now, or was the event of the night a mere farce of his own imagining? Mr. Brotherson was whispering in his room, gaily and with ever increasing volume, and the tune which filled the whole floor with

music was the same grand finale from William Tell which had seemed to work such magic in the night. As Sweetwater caught the mellow but indifferently notes sounding from those lips of brass, he dragged forth the music-box he held hidden in his coat pocket, and flinging it on the floor stamped upon it.

"The man is too strong for me," he cried. "His heart is granite; he meets my every move. What am I to do now?"

CHAPTER XIX.

The Danger Moment.

For a day Sweetwater acknowledged himself to be mentally crushed, disillusioned and defeated. Then his spirits regained their poise.

His opinion was not changed in regard to his neighbor's secret guilt. But he saw, very plainly by this time, that he would have to employ more subtle methods yet ere his hand would touch the goal which so tantalizingly eluded him.

His work at the bench suffered that week; he made two mistakes. But by Saturday night he had satisfied himself that he had reached the point where he would be justified in making use of Miss Chalonier's letters. So he telephoned his wishes to New York, and awaited the promised developments with an anxiety we can only understand by realizing how much greater were his chances of failure than of success. To ensure the latter, every factor in his scheme must work to perfection. The medium of communication (a young, untried girl) must do her part with all the skill of artist and author combined. Would she disappoint them? He did not think so. Women possess a marvelous adaptability for this kind of work, and this one was French, which made the case still more hopeful.

But Brotherson! In what spirit would he meet the proposed advances? Would he even admit the girl, and, if he did, would the interview bear any such fruit as Sweetwater hoped for? The man who could mock the terrors of the night by a careless repetition of a strain instinct with the most sacred memories, was not to be depended upon to show much feeling at sight of a departed woman's writing.

But to other hope remained, and Sweetwater faced the attempt with heroic determination.

The day was Sunday, which ensured Brotherson's being at home. Nothing would have lured Sweetwater out for a moment, though he had no reason to expect that the affair he was anticipating would come off till early evening.

But it did. Late in the afternoon he heard the expected steps go by his door—a woman's steps. But they were not alone. A man accompanied them. What man? Sweetwater hastened to satisfy himself on this point by laying his ear to the partition.

Instantly the whole conversation became audible.

"An errand? Oh, zees, I have an errand!" explained the evidently un-welcome intruder, in her broken English. "This is my brother Pierre. My name is Celeste; Celeste Ledra. I understand English ver' well. I have worked much in families. But he understands nothing. He is all French. He accompanies me for—"

"—what you call it?—les convenances. He knows nothing of the business."

Sweetwater in the darkness of his closet laughed in his gleeful appreciation.

"Great!" was his comment. "Just great! She has thought of everything—or Mr. Gryce has."

Meanwhile, the girl was proceeding with increased volubility.

"What is this business, monsieur? I have something to sell—so you Americans speak. Something you will want much—ver' sacred, ver' precious. A souvenir from the tomb, monsieur. Will you give ten—no, that is too little—fifteen dollars for it? It is worth—Oh, more, much more to the true lover. Pierre, tu es bete. Teins-tu droit sur ta chaise. M. Brotherson est un monsieur comme il faut."

This adjuration, uttered in sharp reprimand and with but little of the French grace, may or may not have been understood by the unsympathetic man they were meant to impress. But the name which accompanied them—his own name, never heard but once before in this house, undoubtedly caused the silence which almost reached the point of embarrassment, before he broke it with the harsh remark:

"Your French may be good, but it does not go with me. Yet is it more intelligible than your English. What do you want here? What have you in that bag you wish to open; and what do you mean by the sentimental trash with which you offer it?"

"Ah, monsieur has not memory of me," came in the sweetest tones of a really seductive voice. "You astonish me, monsieur. I thought you knew—"

everybody else does—Oh, tout le monde, monsieur, that I was Miss Chalonier's maid—near her when other people were not—near her the very day she died."

A pause; then an angry exclamation from some one. Sweetwater thought it from the brother, who may have misinterpreted some look or gesture on Brotherson's part. Brotherson himself would not be apt to show surprise in any such noisy way.

"I—I saw many things—Oh, many things—" the girl proceeded with an admirable mixture of suggestion and reserve. "That day and other days too. She did not talk—Oh, yes, I did not talk, but I saw—Oh, yes, I saw that she—that you—I'll have to say it, monsieur, that you were tres bons amis after that week in Lenox."

"Well?" His utterance of this word was vigorous, but not tender. "What are you coming to? What can you have to show me in this connection that I will believe in for a moment?"

"I have these—Is monsieur certain that no one can hear? I wouldn't have anybody hear what I have to tell you, for the world—for all the world."

"No one can overhear." For the first time that day Sweetwater breathed a full, deep breath. This assurance had sounded heartfelt. "Blessings on her cunning young head. She thinks of everything!"

"You are unhappy. You have thought Miss Chalonier cold;—that she had no response for your ver' ardent passion. But—" these words were uttered sotto voce and with telling pauses—"but I—know—ver' much better than that. She was ver' proud. She had a right; she was no poor girl like me—but she spend hours—hours in writing letters she nevaire send. I saw one, just once, for a little minute; while you could breathe so short as that; and it began with Cheri, or your English for that, and it ended with words—"

Oh, ver' much like these: You may nevaire see these lines, which was ver' interesting, ver' so, and made one want to see what she did with letters she wrote and nevaire mail; so I watch and look, and one day I see them. She had a little ivory box—Oh, ver' nice, ver' pretty. I thought it was jewels she kept locked up so tight. But, non, non, non. It was letters—these letters. I heard them rattle, rattle, not once but many times. You believe me, monsieur?"

"I believe you to have taken every advantage possible to spy upon your mistress. I believe that, yes."

"From interest, monsieur, from great interest."

"Self-interest." "As monsieur pleases. But it was strange, ver' strange for a grande dame like that to write letters—sheets on sheets—and then not send them, nevaire. I dreamed of those letters—I could not help it, no; and when she died so quick—with no word for any one, no word at all, I thought of those writings so secret, so of the heart, and when no one noticed—or thought about this box, or—oh, the key she kept shut tight, oh, always tight in her little gold purse, I—monsieur, do you want to see those letters?" asked the girl, with a gulp. Evidently her appearance frightened her—or had her acting reached this point of extreme finish? "I had nevaire the chance to put them back. And—and they belong to monsieur. They are his—all his—and so beautiful! Ah, just like poetry."

"I don't consider them mine. I haven't a particle of confidence in you or in your story. You are a thief—self-convicted; or you're an agent of the police whose motives I neither understand nor care to investigate. Take up your bag and go. I haven't a cent's worth of interest in its contents."

She started to her feet. Sweetwater heard her chair grate on the painted floor, as she pushed it back in rising. The brother rose too, but more calmly. Brotherson did not stir. Sweetwater felt his hopes rapidly dying down—down into ashes, when suddenly her voice broke forth in pants: "And Marie said—everybody said—that you loved our great lady; that you, of the people, common, common, working with the hands, living with men and women working with the hands, that you had soul, sentiment—that you will of the good and the great, and that you would give your eyes for her words, si fines, si spirituelles, so like des vers de poete. False! false! all false! She was an angel. You are—read that!" she vehemently broke in, opening her bag and whisking a paper down before him. "Read and understand my proud and lovely lady. She did right to die. You are hard—hard. You would have killed her if she had not—"

"Silence, woman! I will read nothing!" came hissing from the strong man's teeth, set in almost ungovernable anger. "Take back this letter, as you call it, and leave my room."

"Nevaire! You will not read? But you shall, you shall. Behold another! One, two, three, four!" Madly she drew from her hand. Madly she con-

tinued her vituperative attack. "Beast! beast! That she should pour out her innocent heart to you, you! I do not want your money, Monsieur of the common street, of the common house. It would be dirt. Pierre, it would be dirt. Ah, bah! je m'oublie tout a fait. Pierre, il est bete. Il refuse de les toucher. Mais il faut qu'il les touche, si je les laisse sur le plancher. Va-t'en! Je me moque de lui. Canaille! L'homme du peuple, tout a fait du peuple!"

A loud slam—the skurrying of feet through the hall, accompanied by the slower and heavier tread of the so-called brother, then silence, and such silence that Sweetwater fancied he could catch the sound of Brotherson's heavy breathing. His own was silenced to a gasp. What a treasure of a girl! How natural her indignation! What an instinct she showed and what comprehension!

But had she imposed on Brotherson? As the silence continued, Sweetwater began to doubt. He understood quite well the importance—of his neighbor's first movement. Were he to tear those letters into shreds! He might be thus tempted. All depended on the strength of his present mood and the real nature of the secret which lay buried in his heart.

There was a sound as of settling coal. Only at night would one expect to hear so slight a sound as that in a tenement full of noisy children. But the moment chanced to be propitious, and it not only attracted the attention of Sweetwater on his side of the wall, but it struck the ear of Brotherson also. With an ejaculation as bitter as it was impatient, he roused himself and gathered up the letters. Sweetwater could hear the successive rustlings as he bundled them up in his hand. Then came another silence—then the lifting of a stove lid.

Sweetwater had not been wrong in his secret apprehension. His identification with his unimpressible neighbor's mood had shown him what to expect. These letters—these in-crease and precious outpourings of a rare and womanly soul—the only conceivable open sesame to the hard-locked nature he found himself pitted against, would soon be resolved into a vanishing puff of smoke.

But the lid was thrust back, and the letters remained in hand. Mortal strength has its limits. Even Brotherson could not shut down that lid on words which might have been meant for him, harshly as he had repelled the idea.

The pause which followed told little; but when Sweetwater heard the man within move with characteristic energy to the door, turn the key and step back again to his place at the table, he knew that the danger moment had passed and that those letters were about to be read, not casually, but seriously, as indeed their contents merited.

This caused Sweetwater to feel serious himself. Upon what result might he calculate?

Impossible to tell. The balance of probability hung even. Sweetwater recognized this, and clung, breathless, to his loop-hole. Fain would he have seen, as well as heard.

Mr. Brotherson read the first letter, standing. As it soon became public property, I will give it here, just as it afterwards appeared in the columns of the greedy journals: "Beloved:

"When I sit, as I often do, in perfect quiet under the stars, and dream that you are looking at them too, not for hours as I do, but for one full mo-



"Take Back This Letter, as You Call It, and Leave This Room."

ment in which your thoughts are with me as wholly as mine are with you, I feel that the bond between us, unseen by the world, and possibly not wholly recognized by ourselves, is instant with the same power which links together the eternities.

"It seems to have always been; to have known no beginning, only a budding, an efflorescence, the visible prod-

uct of a hidden but always present reality. A month ago and I was ignorant, even, of your name. Now, you seem the best known to me, the best understood, of God's creatures. One afternoon of perfect companionship—one flash of strong emotion, with its deep, true insight into each other's soul, and the miracle was wrought. We had met, and henceforth, parting would mean separation only, and not the severing of a mutual bond. One hand, and one only, could do that now. I will not name that hand. For us there is nought ahead but life.

"Thus do I base my heart in the silence which conditions impose upon us. Some day I shall hear your voice again, and then—"

The paper dropped from the reader's hand. It was several minutes before he took up another.

"This one, as it happened, antedated the other, as will appear on reading it:

"My friend:

"I said that I could not write to you—that we must wait. You were willing; but there is much to be accomplished, and the silence may be long. My father is not an easy man to please, but he desires my happiness and will listen to my plea when the right hour comes. When you have won your place—when you have shown yourself to be the man I feel you to be, then my father will recognize your worth, and the way will be cleared, despite the obstacles which now intervene.

"But meantime! Ah, you will not know it, but words will rise—the heart must find utterance. What the lip cannot utter, nor the looks reveal, these pages shall hold in sacred trust for you till the day when my father will place my hand in yours, with heartfelt approval.

"Is it a folly? A woman's weak evasion of the strong silence of man? You may say so some day; but somehow, I doubt it—I doubt it."

The creaking of a chair—the man within had seated himself. There was no other sound; a soul in turmoil wakens no echoes. Sweetwater envied the walls surrounding the unsympathetic reader. They could see. He could only listen.

A little while; then that slight rustling again of the unfolding sheet. The following was read, and then the fourth and last:

"Dearest:

"Did you think I had never seen you till that day we met in Lenox? I am going to tell you a secret—a great, great secret—such a one as a woman hardly whispers to her own heart.

"One day, in early summer, I was sitting in St. Bartholomew's church on Fifth Avenue, waiting for the services to begin. It was early and the congregation was assembling. While idly watching the people coming in, I saw a gentleman pass by me up the aisle, who made me forget all the others. He had not the air of a New Yorker; he was not even dressed in city style, but as I noted his face and expression, I said way down in my heart, 'That is the kind of man I could love; the only man I have ever seen who could make me forget my own world and my own people.' It was a passing thought, soon forgotten.

But when in that hour of embarrassment and peril on Greylock mountain, I looked up into the face of my rescuer and saw again that countenance which so short a time before had called into life impulses till then utterly unknown, I knew that my hour was come. And that was why my confidence was so spontaneous and my belief in the future so absolute.

"I trust your love which will work wonders; and I trust my own, which sprang at a look but only gathered strength and permanence when I found that the soul of the man I loved bettered his outward attractions, making the ideal of my foolish girlhood seem as unsubstantial and evanescent as a dream in the glowing noontide."

"We've played a bout, we two; and you've come out ahead. Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Brotherson. You've cleared yourself so far as I am concerned, I leave this ranch tonight."

The frown had come back to the forehead of the indignant man who confronted him. "So you listened," he cried; "listened when you weren't sneaking under my eye! A fine occupation for a man who can dove-tail a corner like an adept. I wish I had let you join the Brotherhood you were good enough to mention. They would know how to appreciate your double gifts and how to reward your excellence in the one, if not in the other. What did the police expect to learn about me that they should consider it necessary to call into exercise such extraordinary talents?"

"I'm not good at conundrums. I was given a task to perform, and I performed it." Was Sweetwater's sturdy reply. Then slowly, with his eye fixed directly upon his antagonist, "I guess they thought you a man. And so did I until I heard you burn those letters. Fortunately we have copies."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XX.

Confusion.

In his interest in what was going on on the other side of the wall, Sweetwater had forgotten himself. Day-

light had declined, but in the darkness of the closet this change had passed unheeded. Night itself might come, but that should not force him to leave his post so long as his neighbor remained behind his locked door, brooding over the words of love and devotion which had come to him, as it were, from the other world.

But was he brooding? That sound of iron clattering upon iron! That smothered exclamation and the laugh which ended it! Anger and determination rang in that laugh. It had a hideous sound which prepared Sweetwater for the smell which now reached his nostrils. The letters were burning; this time the lid had been lifted from the stove with unrelenting purpose. Poor Edith Chalonier's touching words had met a different fate from any which she, in her ignorance of this man's nature—a nature to which she had ascribed untold perfections—could possibly have conceived.

As Sweetwater thought of this, he stirred nervously in the darkness, and broke into silent invective against the man who could so insult the memory of one who had perished under the blight of his own coldness and misunderstanding. Then he suddenly started back surprised and apprehensive. Brotherson had unlocked his door, and was coming rapidly his way. Sweetwater heard his step in the hall and had hardly time to bound from his closet, when he saw his own door burst in and found himself face to face with his redoubtable neighbor. In a state of such rage as few men could meet without quailing, even were they of his own stature, physical vigor and prowess; and Sweetwater was a small man.

However, disappointment such as he had just experienced brings with it a desperation which often outdoes courage, and the detective, smiling with an air of gay surprise, shouted out:

"Well, what's the matter now? Has the machine busted, or tumbled into the fire or sailed away to lands unknown out of your open window!"

"You were coming out of that closet," was the fierce rejoinder. "What have you got there? Something which concerns me, or why should your face go pale at my presence and your forehead drip with sweat? Don't think that you've deceived me for a moment as to your business here. I recognized you immediately. You've played the stranger well, but you've a nose and an eye nobody could forget. I have known all along that I had a police spy for a neighbor; but it didn't faze me. I've nothing to conceal, and wouldn't mind a regiment of you fellows if you'd only play a straight game. But when it comes to foisting upon me a parcel of letters to which I have no right, and then setting a fellow like you to count my groans or whatever else they expected to hear, I have a right to defend myself, and defend myself I will, by God! But first, let me be sure that my accusations will stand. Come into this closet with me. It abuts on the wall of my room and has its own secret, I know. What is it? I have you at an advantage now, and you shall tell."

He did have Sweetwater at an advantage, and the detective knew it. And disdained a struggle which would have only called up a crowd, friendly to the other but inimical to himself. Allowing Brotherson to drag him into the closet, he stood quiescent, while the determined man who held him with one hand, felt about with the other over the shelves and along the partitions till he came to the hole which had offered such a happy means of communication between the two rooms. Then, with a laugh almost as bitter in tone as that which rang from Brotherson's lips, he acknowledged that business had its necessities and that apologies from him were in order; adding, as they both stepped out into the rapidly darkening room:

"We've played a bout, we two; and you've come out ahead. Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Brotherson. You've cleared yourself so far as I am concerned, I leave this ranch tonight."

The frown had come back to the forehead of the indignant man who confronted him. "So you listened," he cried; "listened when you weren't sneaking under my eye! A fine occupation for a man who can dove-tail a corner like an adept. I wish I had let you join the Brotherhood you were good enough to mention. They would know how to appreciate your double gifts and how to reward your excellence in the one, if not in the other. What did the police expect to learn about me that they should consider it necessary to call into exercise such extraordinary talents?"

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