

# INITIALS ONLY

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"THE FILIGREE BALL" "THE HOUSE OF THE WHISPERING PINES"  
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### SYNOPSIS.

George Anderson and wife see a remarkable looking man come out of the Clarendon hotel, look around furtively, wash his hands in the snow and pass in Clarendon street. When he is found that the beautiful Miss Edith Challoner has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man he saw wearing his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians find that Miss Challoner was strangled and not shot, which seems to clear Brotherson of suspicion. Gryce, an aged detective, and Sweetwater, his assistant, take up the case. Mr. Challoner tells of a batch of letters found in his daughter's desk, signed "O. 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 found in a tavern under the name of Dunn. He is an inventor. Brotherson tells the coroner Miss Challoner refused 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 Challoner affair. Sweetwater admits his daughter was deeply interested, if not in love with Brotherson. Sweetwater gets feelings in the scene holding with Brotherson. He catches the inventor at work at night and is detected by the latter. The detective moves to a room adjoining Brotherson's. He forces a hole in the wall to spy on Brotherson. He visits him and assists the inventor in his work. A girl sent by Sweetwater with Edith Challoner's letters is ordered out by Brotherson. He declares the letters were not written by him. Sweetwater is unmasked by Brotherson, who declares he recognized him at once.

### CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

"Letters!" Fury thickened the speaker's voice, and lent a savage gleam to his eyes. "Forgeries! Make believe! Miss Challoner never wrote the drivel you dare to designate as letters. It was concocted at police headquarters. They made me tell my story and then they found some one who could wield the poetic pen. I'm obliged to them for the confidence they show in my credulity. I credit Miss Challoner with such words as have been given me to read here today? I knew the lady, and I know myself. Nothing that passed between us, not an event in which we were both concerned, has been forgotten by me, and no feature of our intercourse (its language you have ascribed to her. On the contrary, there is a lamentable contradiction between facts as they were and the fancies you have made her indulge in. And this, as you must acknowledge, not only proves their falsity, but exonerates Miss Challoner from all possible charge of sentimentality."

"Yet she certainly wrote those letters. We had them from Mr. Challoner. The woman who brought them was really her maid. We have not deceived you in this."

"I do not believe you."

It was not offensively said; but the conviction it expressed was absolute. Sweetwater recognized the tone, as one of truth, and inwardly laid down his arms. He could never like the man; there was too much iron in his fiber; but he had to acknowledge that as a foe he was invulnerable and therefore admirable to one who had the good sense to appreciate him.

### CHAPTER XXI.

#### A Change.

"It's all up. I'm beaten on my own ground." Thus confessed Sweetwater, in great dejection, to himself. "But I'm going to take advantage of the permission he's just given me and continue the listening act. Just because he told me to do just because he thinks I won't. I'm sure it's no worse than to spend hours of restless tossing in bed, trying to sleep."

But our young detective did neither. As he was putting his supper dishes away, a messenger boy knocked at his door and handed him a note. It was from Gryce and ran thus:

"Steal off, if you can, and as soon as you can, meet me in Twenty-ninth street. A discovery has been made which alters the whole situation."

### CHAPTER XXII.

#### O. B. Again.

"What's happened? Something very important? I ought to hope so after this confounded failure?"

"Failure? Didn't he read the letters?"

"Yes, he read them, had to, but he denies everything. Said she would never have written such letters to him; even goes so far as to declare that if she did write them—(but she is strangely ignorant of her own writing) they were meant for some other man than himself. All right, but

A hitch of the shoulder conveyed Sweetwater's disgust. His uniform good nature was strangely disturbed. "He says that, does he? Come, now! prejudice aside, what's your honest opinion of the man you've had under your eye and ear for three solid weeks? Speak up, my boy."

"I can't. I hate the fellow. I hate anyone who makes me look ridiculous. He—well, well, if you'll have it, sir, I will say this much. If it weren't for that blasted coincidence of the two deaths equally mysterious, equally under his eye, I'd stake my life on his honesty. But that coincidence stamps me and—a sort of feeling I have here."

It is to be hoped that the snap he gave his breast, at this point, carried off some of his superfluous emotion. "You can't account for a feeling, Mr. Gryce. The man has no heart. He's as hard as rocks."

"You've found no evidence against him?"

"No—no."

"Then listen to this. The test with the letters failed, because what he said about them was true. They were not meant for him. Miss Challoner had another lover."

"Only another? I thought there were a half-dozen, at least."

"Another whom she favored. The letters found in her possession—not the ones she wrote herself, but those which were written to her over the signature O. B. were not all from the same hand. Experts have been busy with them for a week, and their reports are unanimous. The O. B. who wrote the threatening lines acknowledged to be Orlando Brotherson, was not the O. B. who penned all of those love letters. The similarity in the writing misled us at first, but once the doubt was raised by Mr. Challoner's discovery of an allusion in one of them which pointed to another writer than Mr. Brotherson, and experts had no difficulty in reaching the decision I have mentioned."

"Two O. B.'s! Isn't that incredible, Mr. Gryce?"

"Yes, it is incredible; but the incredible is not the impossible. The man you've been shadowing denies that these expressive effusions of Miss Challoner were meant for him. Let us see, then, if we can find the man they were meant for."

"The second O. B.?"

"Yes."

Sweetwater's face instantly lit up. "Do you mean that I—after my egregious failure—am not to be kept on the dunce's seat? That you will give me this new job?"

"Yes. We don't know of a better man."

"The superintendent—how does he feel about it?"

"He was the first one to mention you."

"And the inspector?"

"Is glad to see us on a new tack. A pause, during which the eager

"Dear Little Doris!"

light in the young detective's eye clouded over. Presently he remarked: "How will the finding of another O. B. alter Mr. Brotherson's position? To my mind, this discovery of a more favored rival, brings in an element of motive which may rob our self-reliant friend of some of his complicity. We may further, rather than destroy, our case against Brotherson by locating a second O. B."

Mr. Gryce's eyes twinkled. "That won't make your task any more irksome," he smiled. "The loop we thus throw out is as likely to catch Brotherson as his rival."

"The prospect grows pleasing. Where am I to look for my man?"

"Your ticket is bought to Derby, Pa. If he is not employed in the great factories there, we do not know where to find him. We have no other clue."

"I see. It's a short journey I have before me."

"You will start tomorrow?"

She holds the clue; or rather she is the clue to this second O. B."

"Another woman?"

"No, a child—well, I won't say child exactly; she must be sixteen."

"Doris Scott?"

"She lives in Derby. Derby is a small place. You will have no trouble in finding this child. It was to her Miss Challoner's last letter was addressed. The one—"

"I begin to see."

"No, you don't, Sweetwater. The affair is as blind as your hat; nobody sees. We're just feeling along a thread. O. B.'s letters—the real O. B., I mean, are the manifold effusions possible. He's no more of a milkop than this Brotherson; and unlike your indomitable friend he seems to have some heart. I only wish he'd give us some facts; they would have been serviceable. But the letters reveal nothing except that he knew Doris. He writes in one of them: 'Doris is learning to embroider. It's like a fairy weaving a cobweb! Doris isn't a very common name. She must be the same little girl to whom Miss Challoner wrote from time to time.'"

"Was this letter signed O. B.?"

"Yes; they all are. The only difference between his letters and Brotherson's is this: Brotherson's retain the date and address; the second O. B.'s do not."

"How not? Torn off, do you mean?"

"Yes, or rather, neatly cut away; and as none of the envelopes were kept, the only means by which we can locate the writer is through this girl Doris."

"If I remember rightly Miss Challoner's letter to this child was free from all mystery."

"Quite so. It is as open as the day. That is why it has been mentioned as showing the freedom of Miss Challoner's mind five minutes before that fatal thrust."

Sweetwater took up the sheet Mr. Gryce pushed towards him and re-read these lines:

"Dear Little Doris: "It is a snowy night, but it is all bright inside and I feel no chill in mind or body. I hope it is so in the little cottage of Derby; that my little friend is as happy with harsh winds blowing from the mountains as she was on the summer day she came to see me at this hotel. I like to think of her as cheerful and beaming, rejoicing in tasks which make her so womanly and sweet. She is often, often in my mind."

"Affectionately your friend, EDITH A. CHALLONER."

"That to a child of sixteen?"

"Just so."

"Doris spells something besides Doris."

"Yet there is a Doris. Remember that O. B. says in one of his letters, 'Doris is learning to embroider.'"

"Yes, I remember that."

"So you must first find Doris."

"Very good, sir."

"And as Miss Challoner's letter was directed to Derby, Pa., you will go to Derby."

"Yes, sir."

"Anything more?"

"I've been reading this letter again."

"It's worth it."

"The last sentence expresses a hope."

why were all heads turned indifferently from the works, and why were the works themselves in full blast?

These questions he may have asked himself and he may not. His attention was entirely centered on the house he saw before him and on the possible developments awaiting him there. Nothing else mattered. Briskly he stepped out along the sandy road, and after a turn or two which led him quite away from the works and its surrounding buildings, he came out upon the highway and this house.

It was a low and unpretentious one, and had but one distinguishing feature. The porch which hung well over the doorstep was unique in shape and gave an air of picturesqueness to an otherwise simple exterior; a picturesqueness which was much enhanced in its effort by the background of illimitable forest, which united the foreground of this pleasing picture with the great chain of hills which held the works and town in its ample basin.

As he approached the doorstep, his mind involuntarily formed an anticipatory image of the child whose first stitches in embroidery were like a fairy's weaving to the strong man who worked in ore and possibly figured out bridges. That she would prove to be of the ancient type, common among working girls gifted with an imagination they have but scant opportunity to exercise, he had little doubt.

He was therefore greatly taken aback when at his first step upon the porch, the door before him flew open and he beheld in the dark recess beyond a young woman of such bright and blooming beauty that he hardly noticed her expression of extreme anxiety, till she lifted her hand and laid an admonitory finger softly on her lip:

"Hush!" she whispered, with an earnestness which roused him from his absorption and restored him to the full meaning of this encounter. "There is sickness in the house and we are very anxious. Is your errand an important one? If not—"

The faltering break in the fresh, young voice, the look she cast behind her into the darkened interior, were eloquent with the hope that he would recognize her impatience and pass on.

And so he might have done—so he would have done under all ordinary circumstances. But if this was Doris—and he did not doubt the fact after that first moment of startled surprise—how dare he forego this opportunity of settling the question which had brought him here.

With a slight stammer but otherwise giving no evidence of the effect made upon him by the passionate intensity with which she had urged this plea, he assured her that his errand was important, but one so quickly told that it would delay her but a moment. "But first," said he, with very natural caution, "let me make sure that it is to Miss Doris Scott I am speaking. My errand is to her and her only."

Without showing any surprise, perhaps too engrossed in her own thoughts to feel any, she answered with simple directness, "Yes, I, am Doris Scott." Whereupon he became his most persuasive self, and pulling out a folded paper from his pocket, opened it and held it before her, with these words:

"Then will you be so good as to glance at this letter and tell me if the person whose initials you will find at the bottom happens to be in town at the present moment?"

In some astonishment now, she glanced down at the sheet thus boldly thrust before her, and recognizing the O and the B of a well-known signature, she flashed a look back at Sweetwater in which he read a confusion of emotions for which he was hardly prepared.

"Ah," thought he, "it's coming. In another moment I shall hear what will repay me for the trials and disappointments of all these months."

But the moment passed and he had heard nothing. Instead, she dropped her hands from the door-jamb and gave such unmistakable evidence of intended flight, that but one alternative remained to him; he became abrupt.

Thrusting the paper still nearer, he said, with an emphasis which could not fall of making an impression, "Read it. Read the whole letter. You will find your name there. This communication was addressed to Miss Challoner, but—"

Oh, now she found words! With a low cry, she put her hand in quick entreaty, begging him to desist and not speak that name on any pretext or for any purpose. "He may rouse and hear," she explained, with another quick look behind her. "The doctor says that this is the critical day. He may become conscious any minute. If he should and were to hear that name, it might kill him."

"He!" Sweetwater perked up his ears. "Who do you mean by he?"

"Mr. Brotherson, my patient, whose letter—"

But here her impa-

tence rose above every other consideration. Without attempting to finish her sentence, or yielding in the least to her curiosity or interest in this man's errand, she cried out with smothered intensity, "Go! go. I cannot stay another moment from his bedside."

But a thunderbolt could not have moved Sweetwater after the hearing of that name. "Mr. Brotherson!" he echoed. "Brotherson! Not Orlando?"

"No, no; his name is Oswald. He's the manager of these works. He's sick with typhoid. We are caring for him. If you belonged here you would know that much. There! that's his voice you hear. Go, if you have any mercy." And she began to push to the door.

But Sweetwater was impervious to all hint. With eager eyes straining into the shadowy depths just visible over her shoulder, he listened eagerly for the disjointed words now plainly to be heard in some near-by but unseen chamber.

"The second O. B.!" he inwardly declared. "And he's a Brotherson also, and—sick! Miss Scott," he whispered entreated as her hand fell in manifest despair from the door, "don't send me away yet. I've a question of the greatest importance to put you; and one minute more cannot make any difference to him. Listen! those cries are the cries of delirium; he cannot miss you; he's not even conscious."

"He's calling out in his sleep. He's calling her, just as he has called for the last two weeks. But he will wake conscious—or he will not wake at all."

The anguish trembling in that latter phrase would have attracted Sweetwater's earnest, if not pitiful, attention at any other time, but now he had ears only for the cry which at that moment came ringing shrilly from within—

"Edith! Edith!"

The lying shouting for the dead! A heart still warm sending forth its longing to the pierced and pulseless one, hidden in a far-off tomb! To Sweetwater, who had seen Miss Challoner buried, this summons of distracted love came with weird force.

Then the present regained its sway. He heard her name again, and this time it sounded less like a call and more like the welcoming cry of meeting spirits. Was death to end this separation? Had he found the true O. B., only to behold another and final seal fall upon this closely folded mystery? In his fear of this possibility, he caught at Doris' hand as she was about to bound away, and eagerly asked:

"When was Mr. Brotherson taken ill? Tell me, I entreat you, the exact day and, if you can, the exact hour. More depends upon this than you can readily realize."

She wrenched her hand from his, panting with impatience and a vague

alarm. But she answered him distinctly:

"On the twenty-fifth of last month, just an hour after he was made manager. He fell in a faint at the works."

"The day—the very day of Miss Challoner's death!"

"Had he heard—did you tell him then or afterwards what happened in New York on that very date?"

"No, no, we have not told him. It would have killed him—and may yet."

"Edith! Edith!" came again through the hush, a hush so deep that Sweetwater received the impression that the house was empty save for patient and nurse.

This discovery had its effect upon him. Why should he subject this young and loving girl to further pain? He had already learned more than he had expected to. The rest would come with time. But at the first intimation he gave of leaving, she lost her abstracted air and turned with absolute eagerness towards him.

"One moment," said she. "You are a stranger and I do not know your name or your purpose here. But I cannot let you go without begging you

not to mention to anyone in this town that Mr. Brotherson has any interest in the lady whose name we must not speak. Do not repeat that delicious cry you have heard or betray in any way our intense and fearful interest in this young lady's strange death. You have shown me a letter. Do not speak of that letter, I entreat you. Help us to retain our secret a little longer. Only the doctor and myself know what awaits Mr. Brotherson if he lives. I had to tell the doctor, but a doctor reveals nothing. Promise that you will not either, at least till the crisis is passed. It will help my father and it will help me; and we need all the help we can get."

Sweetwater allowed himself one minute of thought, then he earnestly replied:

"I will keep your secret for today, and longer, if possible."

"Thank you," she cried; "thank you. I thought I saw kindness in your face." And she again prepared to close the door.

But Sweetwater had one more question to ask. "Pardon me," said he, as he stepped down on the walk, "you say that this is a critical day with your patient. Is that why every one whom I have seen so far wears such a look of anxiety?"

"Yes, yes," she cried, giving him one other glimpse of her lovely, articulated face. "There's but one feeling in town today, but one hope, and, as I believe, but one prayer. That the man whom every one loves and every one trusts may live to run these works."

"Edith! Edith!" rose in ceaseless reiteration from within.

But it rang but faintly now in the ears of our detective. The door had fallen to, and Sweetwater's share in the anxieties of that household was over.

Slowly he moved away. He was in a confused yet elated condition of mind. Here was food for a thousand new thoughts and conjectures. An Orlando Brotherson and an Oswald Brotherson—relatives possibly, strangers possibly; but whether relatives or strangers, both given to signing their letters with their initials simply; and both the acknowledged admirers of the deceased Miss Challoner. But she had loved only one, and that one, Oswald. It was not difficult to recognize the object of this high-hearted woman's affections in this man whose struggle with the master destroyer had awakened the solicitude of a whole town.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### Suspense.

Ten minutes after Sweetwater's arrival in the village streets, he was at home with the people he found there. His conversation with Doris in the doorway of her home had been observed by the curious and far-sighted and the questions asked and answered had made him friends at once. Of course, he could tell them nothing but that did not matter, he had seen and talked with Doris and their idolized young manager was no worse and might possibly soon be better.

Of his own affairs—of his business with Doris and the manager, they asked nothing. All ordinary interests were lost in the stress of their great suspense.

It was the same in the bar-room of the one hotel. Without resorting to more than a question or two, he readily learned all that was generally known of Oswald Brotherson. Every one was talking about him, and each had some story to tell illustrative of his kindness, his courage and his quick mind. The Works had never produced a man of such varied capabilities and all round sympathies. To have him for manager meant the greatest good which could befall this little community.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### On Life's Road.

All our weariness of suffering is without avail to leave even a little memory among those for whom the work is done. All that is wrought in despair, all that is loveless and mechanical, falls to the ground. We live for even so much as a brief life only in that which carries the breath of our being, the love of our heart. It is not in ceaseless routine and grinding that we live, nor in what is small and anxious. Machines will continue the tale of that forever. No cog will ever be missed in that endless chain. But we shall not wholly die in the song we carry in our heart, the love with which we love the being of another, the smile we give another wayfarer at dusty noonday.—Collier's Weekly.

#### The Open Car Window.

The rule as to windows in passenger cars in Germany has been that they must not be opened on both sides of the car without the consent of all occupying the compartment, but on city and suburban trains in Berlin neither window in the front compartment of each car may be opened without such unanimous consent.

