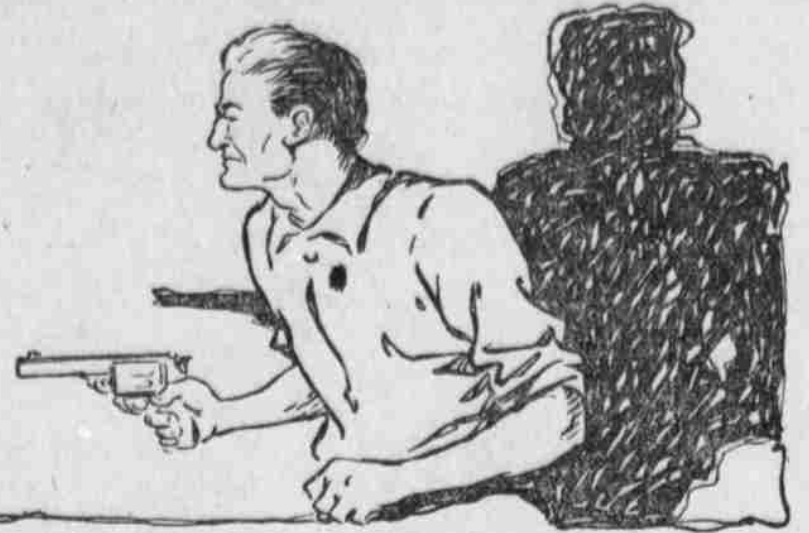


INITIALS ONLY

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN
AUTHOR OF "THE LEAVENWORTH CASE"
"THE FILIGREE BALL" "THE HOUSE OF THE WHISPERING PINES"
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CHARLES W. ROSSER
COPYRIGHT 1911 BY STREET & SMITH
COPYRIGHT 1911 BY DODD, MEAD & CO



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 Challoner has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man who saw wash his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians find that Miss Challoner was stabbed and not shot. Groye, 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 tenement under the name of Duntz. He is an inventor. Brotherson tells the coroner Miss Challoner repulsed him with scorn when he offered her his love. Sweetwater tells the mystery of the murder of a washerwoman in which some details were similar to the Challoner affair. Sweetwater gets lodgings in the same building with Brotherson. He borrows 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. The discovery is made that the letters signed "O. B." were written by two different men. Sweetwater goes to Derby in search of the second "O. B.," whom he expects to locate through one Doris Scott, mentioned in the letters. She is found acting as nurse for Oswald Brotherson, who is critically sick and calls the name of Edith in his delirium. Sweetwater comes across a peculiar but in the woods. He sees a load of boxes marked "O. Brotherson," taken into the but under the supervision of Doris Scott. Doris tells Challoner of seeing in a dream the face of the man who killed Edith. The door bell rings and she recognizes the visitor the man of her dream. It is Orlando Brotherson, who requests an interview with his brother. It develops that Orlando is working on a flying machine. Oswald is told of Edith's death.

manly. He was not of that ilk. Intellect was his god; ambition his motive power. What would this casual blight upon his supreme contentment be to him, when with the wings of his air-car spread, he should spurn the earth and soar into the heaven of fame simultaneously with his flight into the open.

He could wait for that hour. He had measured the gulf before him and found it passable. Henceforth no looking back.

Rising, he stood for a moment gazing, with an alert eye now, upon such sections of his car as had not yet been fitted into their places; then he bent forward to his work, and soon the lips which had uttered that sardonic laugh a few minutes before, parted in gentler fashion, and sang took the place of curses—a ballad of love and fondest truth. But Orlando never knew what he sang. He had the gift and used it.

Would his tones, however, have rung out with quite so mellow a sweetness had he seen the restless figure even then circling his retreat with eyes darting accusation and arms lifted towards him in wild but impotent threat?

Yes, I think they would; for he knew that the man who thus expressed his helplessness along with his convictions, was no nearer the end he had set himself to attain than on the day he first betrayed his suspicions.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Hut Changes Its Name.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—Continued.
"Chance?" he repeated. "Orlando, I believe in God."

"Then seek your comfort there, I find it in harnessing the winds; in forcing the powers of nature to do my bidding."

The other did not speak, and the silence grew heavy. It was broken, when it was broken, by a cry from Oswald:

"No more," said he, "no more." Then, in a yearning accent, "Send Doris to me."

Orlando started. This name coming so close upon that word comfort produced a strange effect upon him. But another look at Oswald and he was ready to do his bidding. The bitter ordeal was over; let him have his solace if it was in her power to give it to him.

Orlando, upon leaving his brother's room, did not stop to deliver that brother's message directly to Doris; he left this for Truda to do, and retired immediately to his hangar in the woods. Locking himself in, he slightly raised the roof and then sat down before the car which was rapidly taking on shape and assuming that individuality and appearance of sentient life which hitherto he had only seen in dreams. But his eye, which had never failed to kindle at this sight before, shone dully in the semi-gloom. The air-car could wait; he would first have his hour in this solitude of his own making. The gaze he dreaded, the words from which he shrank could not penetrate here. He might even shout her name aloud, and only these windowless walls would respond. He was alone with his past, his present and his future.

Alone! He needed to be. The strongest must pause when the precipice yawns before him. The gulf can be spanned; he feels himself forceful enough for that; but his eyes must take their measurement of it first; he must know its depths and possible dangers. Only a fool would ignore these steep cliffs of jagged rock; and he was no fool, only a man to whom the unexpected had happened, a man who had seen his way clear to the horizon and then had come up against this! Love, when he thought such folly dead! Remove, when Glory called for the quiet mind and heart!

He recognized its mordant fang, and knew that its ravages, though only just begun, would last his lifetime. Nothing could stop them now, nothing, nothing. And he laughed, as the thought went home; laughed at the irony of fate and its inexorableness; laughed at his own defeat and his barrenness to a barred Paradise. Oswald loved Edith, loved her yet, with a flame time would take long to quench. Doris loved Oswald and he Doris; and not one of them would ever attain the delights each was so fitted to enjoy. Why shouldn't he laugh? What is left to man but mockery when all props fall? Disappointment alone was the universal lot; and it should go merrily with him if he must take his turn at it. But here the strong spirit of the man reassured itself; it should be but a turn. A man's joys are not bounded by his loves or even by the satisfaction of a perfectly untrammelled mind. Performance makes a world of its own for the capable and the strong, and this was still left to him. He, Orlando Brotherson, despair while his great work lay unfinished! That would be to lay stress on the inevitable pains and fears of commonplace hu-

and get well faster—or not get well at all."

This latter he half whispered, and Doris, tripping from the room may not have heard it, for her face showed no further shadow as she ushered in Mr. Challoner, and closed the door behind him. She had looked forward to this moment for days. To Oswald, however, it was an unexpected excitement and his voice trembled with something more than physical weakness as he greeted his visitor and thanked him for his attentions.

"Doris says that you have shown me this kindness from the desire you have to see me well again, Mr. Challoner. Is this true?"

"Very true. I cannot emphasize the fact too strongly."

Oswald's eyes met his again, this time with great earnestness. "You must have serious reasons for feeling so—reasons which I do not quite understand. May I ask why you place such value upon a life which, if ever useful to itself or others, has lost and lost forever, the one delight which gave it meaning?"

It was for Mr. Challoner's voice to tremble now, as reaching out his hand, he declared, with unmistakable feeling:

"I have no son. I have no interest in life, outside this room and the possibilities it contains for me. Your attachment to my daughter has created a bond between us, Mr. Brotherson, which I sincerely hope to see recognized by you."

Started and deeply moved, the young man stretched out a shaking hand towards his visitor, with the feeble but exulting cry:

"Then you do not blame me for her wretched and mysterious death. You hold me guiltless of the misery which nerved her despairing arm?"

"Quite guiltless."

Oswald's wan and pinched features took on a beautiful expression and Mr. Challoner no longer wondered at his daughter's choice.

"Thank God!" fell from the sick man's lips, and then there was a silence during which their two hands met.

It was some minutes before either spoke and then it was Oswald who said:

"I must confide to you certain facts. I honored your daughter and realized her position fully. Our plight was never made in words, nor should I have presumed to advance any claim to her hand if I had not made good my expectations, Mr. Challoner. I meant to win both her regard and yours by acts, not words. I felt that I had a great deal to do and I loved her—"

He turned away his head and the silence which filled up the gap united those two hearts as the old and young are seldom united.

But when a little later Mr. Challoner rejoined Doris, in her little sitting-room, he nevertheless showed a perplexity she had hoped to see removed by this understanding with the younger Brotherson.

The cause became apparent as soon as he spoke.

"These brothers hold by each other," said he. "Oswald will hear nothing against Orlando. He says that he has redeemed his fault. He does not even protest that his brother's word is to be believed in this matter. He does not seem to think that necessary. He evidently regards Orlando's personality as speaking as truly and satisfactorily for itself, as his own does. And I dared not undeceive him."

"He does not know all our reasons for distrust. He has heard nothing about the poor washerwoman."

"No, and he must not—not for weeks. He has borne all that he can."

"His confidence in his older brother is sublime. I do not share it; but I cannot help but respect him for it."

It was warmly said, and Mr. Challoner could not forbear casting an anxious look at her upturned face. What he saw there made him turn away with a sigh.

"This confidence has for me a very unhappy side," he remarked. "It shows me Oswald's thought. He who loved her best, accepts the cruel verdict of an unreasoning public."

Doris' large eyes burned with a weird light upon his face.

"He has not had my dream," she murmured, with all the quiet of an unmoved conviction.

Yet as the days went by, even her manner changed towards the busy inventor. It was hardly possible for it not to. The high stand he took; the regard accorded him on every side; his talent; his conversation, which was an education in itself, and above all, his absorption in a work daily advancing towards completion, removed him so insensibly and yet so decidedly, from the hideous past of tragedy with which his name, if not his honor, was associated, that, unconsciously to herself, she gradually lost her icy air of repulsion and lent him a more or less attentive ear, when he chose to join their small company of an evening. The result was that he turned

so bright a side upon her that toleration merged from day to day into admiration and memory lost itself in anticipation of the event which was to prove him a man of men, if not one of the world's greatest mechanical geniuses.

Meantime, Oswald was steadily improving in health, if not in spirits. He had taken his first walk without any unfavorable results, and Orlando decided from this that the time had come for an explanation of his device and his requirements in regard to it. Seated together in Oswald's room, he broached the subject thus:

"Oswald, what is your idea about what I'm making up there?"

"That it will be a success."

"I know; but its character, its use? What do you think it is?"

"I've an idea; but my idea doesn't fit the conditions."

"How's that?"

"The shed is too closely hemmed in. You haven't room—"

"For what?"

"To start an aeroplane."

"Yet it is certainly a device for flying."

"I supposed so; but—"

"It is an air-car with a new and valuable idea—the idea for which the whole world has been seeking ever since the first aeroplane found its way up from the earth. My car needs no room to start in save that which it occupies. If it did, it would be but the modification of a hundred others."

"Orlando!"

As Oswald thus gave expression to his surprise, their two faces were a study: the fire of genius in the one; the light of sympathetic understanding in the other.

"If this car, now within three days of its completion," Orlando proceeded, "does not rise from the oval of my hangar like a bird from its nest, and after a wide and circling flight descend again into the self-same spot without any swerving from its direct course, then have I failed in my endeavor and must take a back seat with the rest. But it will not fail. I'm certain of success, Oswald. All I want just now is a sympathetic helper—you, for instance; some one who will aid me with the final fittings and hold his peace to all eternity if the impossible occurs and the thing proves a failure."

"Have you such pride as that?"

"Precisely."

"So much that you cannot face failure?"

"Not when attached to my name. You can see how I feel about that by the secrecy I have worked under. No other person living knows what I have just communicated to you. Every part shipped here came from different manufacturing firms; sometimes a part of a part was all I allowed to be made in any one place. My fame, like the ship, must rise with one bound into the air, or it must never rise at all. I was not made for petty accomplishment, or the slow plodding of commonplace minds. I must startle, or remain obscure. That is why I chose this place for my venture, and you for my helper and associate."

"You want me to ascend with you?"

"Exactly."

"At the end of three days?"

"Yes."

"Orlando, I cannot."

"You cannot? Not strong enough yet? I'll wait then—three days more."

"The time's too short. A month is scarcely sufficient. It would be folly, such as you never show, to trust a nerve so undermined as mine till time has restored its power. For an enterprise like this you need a man of ready strength and resources; no one whose condition you might be obliged to consider at a very critical moment."

"Orlando, balked thus at the outset, showed his displeasure."

"You do not do justice to your will. It is strong enough to carry you through anything."

"It was."

"You can force it to act for you."

"I fear not, Orlando."

"I counted on you and you thwart me at the most critical moment of my life."

Oswald smiled; his whole candid and generous nature bursting into view in one quick flash.

"Perhaps," he assented; "but you will thank me when you realize my weakness. Another man must be found—quick, deft, secret, yet honorably alive to the importance of the occasion and your rights as a great original thinker and mechanician."

"Do you know such a man?"

"I don't; but there must be many such among our workmen."

"There isn't one; and I haven't time to send to Brooklyn. I reckoned on you."

"Can you wait a month?"

"No."

"A fortnight, then?"

"No, not ten days."

Oswald looked surprised. He would like to have asked why such precipitation was necessary, but the tone in which this ultimatum was given was of that decisive character which ad-

mits of no argument. He therefore merely looked his query. But Orlando was not one to answer looks; besides, he had no reply for the same impertunate question urged by his own good sense. He knew that he must make the attempt upon which his future rested soon, and without risk of the sapping influence of lengthened suspense and weeks of waiting. He could hold on to those two demons leagued in attack against him, for a definite seven days, but not for an indeterminate time. If he were to be saved from folly—from himself—events must rush.

He therefore repeated his "No," with increased vehemence, adding, as he marked the reproach in his brother's eye, "I cannot wait. The test must be made on Saturday evening next, whatever the conditions; whatever the weather. An air-car to be serviceable must be ready to meet lightning and tempest, and what is worse, perhaps, an insufficient crew."

Then rising, he exclaimed, with a determination which rendered him majestic, "If help is not forthcoming, I'll do it all myself. Nothing shall hold me back; nothing shall stop me; and when you see me and hear my car rise above the treetops, you'll feel that I have done what I could to make you forget—"

He did not need to continue. Oswald understood and flashed a grateful look his way before saying:

"You will make the attempt at night?"

"Certainly."

"And on Saturday?"

"I've said it."

"I will run over in my mind the qualifications of such men as I know and acquaint you with the result tomorrow."

"There are adjustments to be made. A man of accuracy is necessary."

"I will remember."

"And he must be likable. I can do nothing with a man with whom I'm not perfectly in accord."

"I understand that."

"Good-night then." A moment of hesitancy, then, "I wish not only yourself but Miss Scott to be present at this test. Prepare for the spectacle; but not yet, not till within an hour or two of the occasion."

And with a proud smile in which he flashed a significance which startled Oswald, he gave a hurried nod and turned away.

When in an hour afterwards, Doris looked in through the open door, she found Oswald sitting with face buried in his hands, thinking so deeply that he did not hear her. He had sat like this, immovable and absorbed, ever since his brother had left him.

the weight of Oswald's woe, then would the world behold a triumph which would dwarf the ecstasy of the bird's flight and rob the eagle of his kingly pride. But Doris barely endured his as yet, and the thought was not one to be considered for a moment. Yet what other course remained? He was brooding deeply on the other subject, in his hangar one evening—(it was Thursday and Saturday was but two days off) when there came a light knock at the door.

This had never occurred before. He had given strict orders, backed by his brother's authority, that he was never to be intruded upon when in this place; and though he had sometimes encountered the prying eyes of the curious flashing from behind the trees encircling the hangar, his door had never been approached before, or his privacy encroached upon. He started then, when this low but penetrating sound struck across the turmoil of his thoughts, and cast one look in the direction from which it came; but he did not rise, or even change his position on his workman's stool.

Then it came again, still low but with an insistence which drew his brows together and made his hand fall from the wire he had been unconsciously holding through the mental debate which was absorbing him. Still he made no response, and the knocking continued. Should he ignore it entirely, start up his motor and render himself oblivious to all other sounds? At every other point in his career he would have done this, but an unknown, and as yet unnamed, something had entered his heart during this fatal month, which made old ways impossible and oblivion a thing he dared not court too recklessly. Should this be a summons from Doris! Should (inconceivable idea, yet it seized upon him relentlessly and would not yield for the asking) should it be Doris herself!

Taking advantage of a momentary cessation of the ceaseless tap tap, he listened. Silence was never profounder than in this forest on that windless night. Earth and air seemed, to his strained ear, emptied of all sound. The clatter of his own steady, un-

hastened heart-beat was all that broke upon the stillness. He might be alone in the Universe for all token of life beyond these walls, or so he was saying to himself, when sharp, quick, sinister, the knocking recommenced, demanding admission, insisting upon attention, drawing him against his own will to his feet, and finally, though he made more than one stand against it, to the very door.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XXXV.

Senses of Plants.

The sense most developed in plants is that of sight, which enables them to see light but not to distinguish objects. This sense limitation is found among many living creatures, such as the earthworm, oyster and coral, etc., which possess no localized visual organ, but give proof of their luminous impressions by the contractions that they manifest when exposed to a ray of sunshine. Similarly, it is easy to gauge the influence of light on plants. Cultivate a plant in a room with a window only on one side and its stalks in growing will incline toward the source of light. Physiologists explain this by suggesting that the side to the dark grows more quickly than that exposed to the light. There remains, however, the fact that the plant has reacted to the light of whose effect it was conscious.

A sense common to many plants is that of touch. Of this the most illustrative example is, as its name implies, the sensitive plant. Another leaf, responsive to the touch, is the catch-fly, whose two halves close down upon the other by means of a central hinge.—Harper's Weekly.

Lians Tagged Here.

Dyaks, natives of Borneo, are extremely truthful. So disgraceful, indeed, do the Dyaks consider the deceiving of others by an untruth that such is handed down to posterity by a curious custom. They heap up a pile of branches of trees in memory of the man who has uttered a great lie, so that the future generations may know of his wickedness and take warning from it.

The persons deceived start the tugong bula—the liar's mound—by heaping up a large number of branches in some conspicuous spot by the side of the path from one village to another.

Every passerby contributes to it and at the same time reviles the memory of the man who told the lie. The Dyaks consider the addition to any tugong bula they may pass a sacred duty, the omission of which will meet with supernatural punishment.

Nothing Else to Do.

"What are the wild waves saying, mother?" "I do not know, my child."

"But why do they dance all day long?" "Well, my child, they cannot play bridge."—Kansas City Journal.

Silence—and a Knock.

Oswald did not succeed in finding a man to please Orlando. He sug-



There Came a Light Knock at the Door.

gested one person after another to the exacting inventor, but none were satisfactory to him and each in turn was turned down. It is not every one we want to have share a world-wide triumph or an ignominious defeat. And the days were passing.

He had said in a moment of elation, "I will do it alone; but he knew even then that he could not. Two hands were necessary to start the car; afterwards, he might manage it alone. Descent was even possible, but to give the contrivance its first lift required a second mechanician. Where was he to find one to please him? And what was he to do if he did not? Conquer his prejudices against such men as he had seen, or delay the attempt, as Oswald had suggested, till he could get one of his old cronies on from New York. He could do neither. The obstinacy of his nature was such as to offer an invincible barrier against either suggestion. One alternative remained. He had heard of women aviators. If Doris could be induced to accompany him into the air, instead of clinging sodden-like to