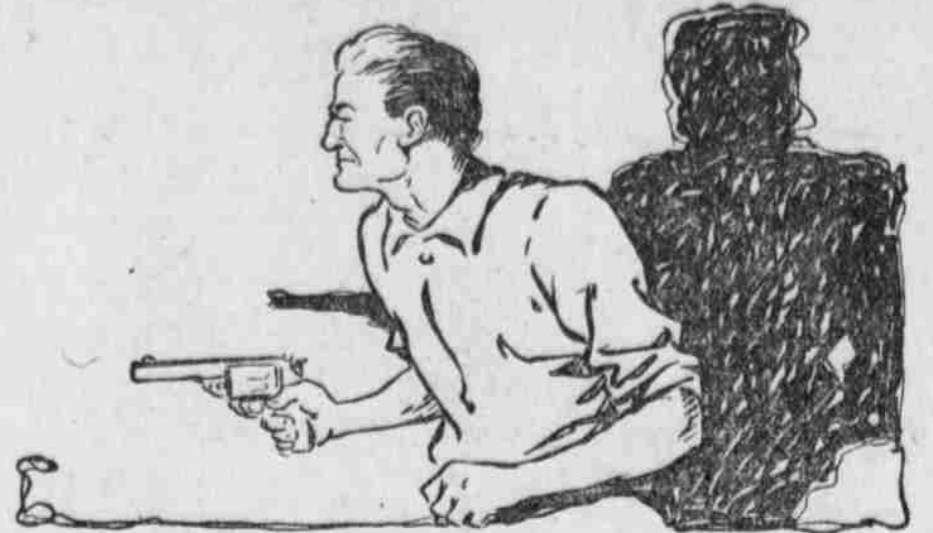


INITIALS ONLY

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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 'Clemont' hotel, look around furtively, wash his hands in the snow and pass on. Commotion attracts them to the 'Clemont,' where it is found that the beautiful Miss South Chalonner has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man he saw wash his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians find that Miss Chalonner was stabbed and not shot. Grey, an aged detective, and Sweetwater, his assistant, take up the case. Mr. Chalonner tells of a batch of letters found in his daughter's desk, signed 'O. B.' All the letters, except one, which shows that the writer was displeased. This letter was signed by Orlando Brotherson. Sweetwater with Sweetwater to identify Brotherson, who is found in a tenement under the name of Dunn. He is an inventor. Sweetwater tells the curious story of Chalonner's murder, which was a mystery. Some details were similar to the Chalonner 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 Chalonner'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 hut in the woods. He sees a load of boxes marked 'O. Brotherson,' taken into the hut under the supervision of Doris Scott. Doris tells Chalonner of seeing in a dream the face of the man who killed Edith. The door bell rings and she recognizes in the visitor the man of her dream. It is Orlando Brotherson, who requests an interview with his brother. It develops that Oswald is working on a flying machine. Oswald is told of Edith's death. Orlando tells his brother of his repulse by Miss Chalonner. Orlando asks his brother to assist in 'leaving' his car, as he can trust no one else. Oswald returns owing to his weakened condition. Sweetwater offers his services as an assistant and shows he knows something of Brotherson's ideas. The air car proves a success. Oswald declares his grief over Edith's death renders him incapable of accepting his brother's offer to share in his work and triumph. Orlando offers himself to Doris and is refused. He spends the night in the hangar in a daze.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Avenger.

"Dear Mr. Chalonner:
"With every apology for the intrusion, may I request a few minutes of private conversation with you this evening at seven o'clock? Let it be in your own room."
"Yours truly,
"ORLANDO BROTHERSON."

Mr. Chalonner had been called upon to face many difficult and heartrending duties since the blow which had desolated his home fell upon him. But from none of them had he shrunk as he did from the interview thus demanded. He had supposed himself rid of this man. He had dismissed him from his life when he had dismissed Sweetwater. His face, accordingly, wore anything but a propitiatory look when promptly at the hour of seven, Orlando Brotherson entered his apartments. His pleasure or his displeasure was, however, a matter of small consequence to his self-invited visitor. He had come there with a set purpose, and nothing in heaven or earth could deter him from it now. Declining the offer of a seat, with the slightest of acknowledgments in the way of a bow, he took a careful survey of the room before saying:

"Are we alone, Mr. Chalonner, or is that man Sweetwater lurking somewhere within hearing?"

"Mr. Sweetwater is gone, as I had the honor of telling you yesterday," was the somewhat stiff reply. "There are no witnesses to this conference, if that is what you wish to know."

"Thank you, but you will pardon my insistence if I request the privilege of closing that door." He pointed to the one communicating with the bedroom. "The information I have to give you is not such as I am willing to have shared, at least for the present."

"You may close the door," said Mr. Chalonner coldly. "But is it necessary for you to give me the information you mention, tonight? If it is of such a nature that you cannot accord me the privilege of sharing it, as yet, with others, why not spare me till you can? I have gone through much, Mr. Brotherson."

"You have," came in steady assent as the man thus addressed stepped to the door he had indicated and quietly closed it. "But," he continued, as he crossed back to his former position, "would it be easier for you to go through the night now in anticipation of what I have to reveal than to hear it at once from my lips while I am in the mood to speak?"

The answer was slow in coming. The courage which had upheld this rapidly aging man through so many trying interviews, seemed inadequate for the test put so cruelly upon it. He faltered and sank heavily into a chair, while the stern man watching him, gave no signs of responsive sympathy or even interest, only a patient and icy-tempered resolve.

"I cannot live in uncertainty," such were finally Mr. Chalonner's words. "What you have to say concerns Edith!" The pause he made was infinitesimal in length, but it was long

enough for a quick disclaimer. But no such disclaimer came. "I will hear it," came in reluctant finish.

Mr. Brotherson took a step forward. His manner was as cold as the heart which lay like a stone in his bosom.

"Will you pardon me if I ask you to rise?" said he. "I have my weaknesses too. (He gave no sign of them.) "I cannot speak down from such a height to the man I am bound to hurt."

As if answering to the constraint of a will quite outside his own, Mr. Chalonner rose. Their heads were now more nearly on a level and Mr. Brotherson's voice remained low, as he proceeded, with quiet intensity:

"There has been a time—and it may exist yet, God knows—when you thought me in some unknown and secret way the murderer of your daughter. I do not quarrel with the suspicion; I do not quarrel with the fact; I did kill your daughter, and with this hand! I can no longer deny it."

The wretched father swayed, following the gesture of the hand thus held out; but he did not fall, nor did a sound leave his lips.

Brotherson went coldly on:

"I did it because I regarded her treatment to my suit as insolent. I have no mercy for any such display of intolerance on the part of the rich and the fortunate. I hated her for it; I hated her class, herself and all she stood for. To strike the dealer of such a hurt I felt to be my right. Though a man of small beginnings and of a stock which such as you call common, I have a pride which few of your blood can equal. I could not work, or sleep or eat with such a sting in my breast as she had planted there. To rid myself of it, I determined to kill her, and I did. How? Oh, that was easy, though it has proved a great stumbling-block to the detectives, as I knew it would! I shot her—but not with an ordinary bullet. My charge was a small icicle made deliberately for the purpose. It had strength enough to penetrate, but it left no trace behind it. 'A bullet of ice for a heart of ice,' I had said in the torment of my rage. But the word was without knowledge, Mr. Chalonner. I see it now; I have seen it for two whole weeks. I did not misjudge her condemnation of me, but I misjudged its cause. It was not to the comparatively poor, the comparatively obscure man she sought to show contempt, but to the brother of Oswald whose claims she saw insulted. A woman I should have respected, not killed. A woman of no pride of station; a woman who loved a man not only of my own class, but of my own blood—a woman, to avenge whose unmerited death I stand here before you a self-condemned criminal. That is but justice, Mr. Chalonner. That is the way I look at things. Though no sentimentalist, and dead to all beliefs save the eternal truths of science, I have that in me which will not let me profit, now that I know myself unworthy, by the great success I have earned. Hence this confession, Mr. Chalonner. It has not come easily, nor do I shut my eyes in the least to the results which must follow. But I cannot do differently. Tomorrow, you may telegraph to New York. Till then I desire



"Murderer! Doubly-Dyed Murderer of Innocent Women!"

to be left undisturbed. I have many things to dispose of in the interim."

Mr. Chalonner, very white by now, pointed to the door before he sank again into his chair. Brotherson took it for dismissal and stepped slowly back. Then their eyes met again and Mr. Chalonner spoke his first word:

"There was another—a poor woman—she died suddenly—and her wound was not unlike that inflicted upon Edith. Did you—"

"I did." The answer came without a tremor. "You may say and so may others that I was less justified in this attack than in the other; but I do not see it that way. A theory does not always work in practice. I wished to test the unusual means I contemplated, and the woman I saw before me across the court was hard-work-

ing and with nothing in life to look forward to, so—"

A cry of bitter execration from Mr. Chalonner cut him short. Turning with a shrug, he was about to lift his hand to the door, when he gave a violent start and fell hastily back before a quickly entering figure of such passion and fury as neither of these men has ever seen before.

It was Oswald! Oswald, the kindly! Oswald, the lover of men and the adorer of women! Oswald, with the words of the dastardly confession he had partly overheard searing hot within his brain! Oswald, raised in a moment from the desponding invalid to a terrifying ministrant of retributive justice.

Orlando could scarcely raise his hand before the other's was upon his throat.

"Murderer! doubly-dyed murderer of innocent women!" was hissed in the strong man's ears. "Not with the law, but with me you must reckon, and may God and the spirit of my mother nerve my arm!"

CHAPTER XL.

Desolate.

The struggle was fierce but momentary. Oswald with his weakened powers could not long withstand the steady exertion of Orlando's giant strength, and ere long sank away from the contest into Mr. Chalonner's arms.

"You should not have summoned the shade of our mother to your aid," observed the other with a smile, in which the irony was lost in terrible passage. "I was always her favorite."

Oswald shuddered. Orlando had spoken truly; she had always been blindly, arrogantly trustful of her eldest son. No fault could she see in him; and now—

Impetuously Oswald struggled with his weakness, raised himself in Mr. Chalonner's arms and cried in loud revolt:

"But God is just. He will not let you escape, if he does, I will not. I will bound you to the ends of this earth and, if necessary, into the eternities. Not with the threat of my arm—you are my master there, but with the curse of a brother who believed you innocent of his darling's blood and would have believed you so in face of everything but your own word."

"Peace!" adjured Orlando. "There is no account I am not ready to settle. I have robbed you of the woman you love, but I have despoiled myself. I stand desolate in the world, who but an hour ago could have chosen my seat among the best and greatest. What can your curses do after that?"

"Nothing." The word came slowly like a drop wrung from a nearly spent heart. "Nothing; nothing. Oh, Orlando, I wish we were both dead and buried and that there were no further life for either of us."

The softened tone, the wistful prayer which would blot out an immortality of joy for the one, that it might save the other from an immortality of retribution, touched some long un-sounded chord in Orlando's extraordinary nature.

Advancing a step, he held out his hand—the left one. "We'll leave the future to itself, Oswald, and do what we can with the present," said he. "I've made a mess of my life and spoiled a career which might have made us both kings. Forgive me, Oswald. I ask for nothing else from God or man. I should like that. It would strengthen me for tomorrow."

But Oswald, ever kindly, generous and more ready to think of others than of himself, had yet some of Orlando's tenacity. He gazed at that hand and a flush swept over his cheek which instantly became ghastly again.

"I cannot," said he—"not even the left one. May God forgive me!"

Orlando, struck silent for a moment, dropped his hand and slowly turned away. Mr. Chalonner felt Oswald stiffen in his arms, and break suddenly away, only to stop short before he had taken one of the half dozen steps between himself and his departing brother.

"Where are you going?" he demanded in tones which made Orlando turn the sarcastic reply. "But I doubt if he would receive me. No," he added, in more ordinary tones as the other shivered and again started forward, "you will have no trouble in finding me in my own room tonight. I have letters to write and—other things. A man like me cannot drop out without a ripple. You may go to bed and sleep. I will keep awake for two."

"Orlando!" Visions were passing before Oswald's eyes, soul-crushing visions such as in his blameless life he never thought could enter into his consciousness or blast his tranquil outlook upon life. "Orlando!" he again appealed, covering his eyes in a frozen attempt to shut out these horrors. "I cannot let you go like this. Tomorrow, in every niche and cor-

ner of this world, wherever Edith Chalonner's name has gone, wherever my name has gone, it will be known that the discoverer of a practical airship, is a man whom they can no longer honor. Do you think that is not hell enough for me; or that I do not realize the hell it will be for you? I've never wearied you or any man with my affection; but I'm not all demon. I would gladly have spared you this additional anguish; but that was impossible. You are my brother and must suffer from the connection whether we would have it so or not. If it promises too much misery—and I know no misery like that of shame—come with me where I go tomorrow. There will be room for two."

Oswald, swaying with weakness, but maddened by the sight of an overthrow which carried with it the stifled affections and the admiration of his whole life, gave a bound forward, opened his arms and—fell.

Orlando stopped short. Gazing down on his prostrate brother, he stood for a moment with a gleam of something like human tenderness showing through the flare of dying passions and perishing hopes; then he swung open the door and passed quietly out, and Mr. Chalonner could hear the laughing remark with which he met and dismissed the half-dozen men and women who had been drawn to this end of the hall by what had sounded to them like a fracas between angry men.

CHAPTER XLI.

Five O'clock in the Morning.

The clock in the hotel office struck three. Orlando Brotherson counted the strokes; then went on writing. His transom was partly open and he had just heard a step go by his door.

This was nothing new. He had already heard it several times before that night. It was Mr. Chalonner's step, and every time it passed, he had rustled his paper or scratched vigorously with his pen. "He is keeping watch for Oswald," was his thought. "They fear a sudden end to this. No one, not the son of my mother knows me. Do I know myself?"

Four o'clock! The light was still burning, the pile of letters he was writing increasing.

Five o'clock! A rattling shade betrays an open window. No other sound disturbs the quiet of the room. It is empty now; but Mr. Chalonner, long since satisfied that all was well, goes by no more. Silence has settled upon the hotel;—that heavy silence which precedes the dawn.

There was silence in the streets also. The few who were abroad, crept quietly along. An electric storm was in the air and the surcharged clouds hung heavy and low, biding the moment of outbreak. A man who had left a place of many shadows for the more open road, paused and looked up at these clouds; then went calmly on.

Suddenly the shriek of an approaching train tears through the valley. Has it a call for this man? No. Yet he pauses in the midst of the street he is crossing and watches, as a child might watch, for the flash of its lights at the end of the darkened vista. It comes—filling the empty space at which he stares with moving life—engine, baggage car and a long string of Pullmans. Then all is dark again and only the noise of its slackening wheels comes to him through the night. It has stopped at the station. A minute longer and it has started again, and the quickly lessening rumble of its departure is all that remains of this vision of man's activity and ceaseless expectancy. When it is quite gone and all is quiet, a sigh falls from the man's lips and he moves on, but this time, for some unexplainable reason, in the direction of the station. With lowered head he passes along, noting little till he arrives within sight of the depot where some freight is being handled, and a trunk or two wheeled down the platform. No sight could be more ordinary or unobtrusive, but it has its attraction for him, for he looks up as he goes by and follows the passage of that truck down the platform till it has reached the corner and disappeared. Then he sighs again and again and moves on.

A cluster of houses, one of them open and lighted, was all which lay between him now and the country road. He was hurrying past, for his step had unconsciously quickened as he turned his back upon the station, when he was seized again by that mood of curiosity and stepped up to the door from which a light issued and looked in. A common eating-room lay before him, with rudely spread tables and one very sleepy waiter taking orders from a new arrival who sat with his back to the door. Why did the lonely man on the sidewalk start as his eye fell on the latter's commonplace figure, a hungry man demanding breakfast in a cheap, country restaurant? His own physique was powerful while that of the other looked slim and frail. But fear was in the air, and the brooding of a

tempest affects some temperaments in a totally unexpected manner. As the man inside turns slightly and looks up, the master figure on the sidewalk vanishes, and his step, if any one had been interested enough to listen, rings with a new note as it turns into the country road it has at last reached.

But no one heeded. The new arrival munches his roll and waits impatiently for his coffee, while without, the clouds pile soundlessly in the sky, one of them taking the form of a huge hand with clutching fingers reaching down into the hollow void beneath.

CHAPTER XLII.

At Six.

Mr. Chalonner had been honest in his statement regarding the departure of Sweetwater. He had not only paid and dismissed our young detective, but he had seen him take the train for New York. And Sweetwater had gone away in good faith, too, possibly with his convictions undisturbed, but acknowledging at last that he had reached the end of his resources. But the brain does not loose its hold upon its work as readily as the hand does. He was halfway to New York and had consciously bidden farewell to the whole subject, when he suddenly started those about him by rising impetuously to his feet. He sat again immediately, but with a light in his small grey eyes which Mr. Glyce would have understood and revelled in. The idea for which he had searched industriously for months had come at last, unbidden; thrown up from some remote recess of the mind which had seemingly closed upon the subject forever.

"I have it. I have it," he murmured in ceaseless reiteration to himself. "I will go back to Mr. Chalonner and let him decide if the idea is worth pursuing. Perhaps an experiment may be necessary. It was bitter cold that night; I wish it were icy weather now. But a chemist can help us out. Good God! if this should be the explanation of the mystery, alas for Orlando and alas for Oswald!"

But his sympathies did not deter him. He returned to Derby at once, and as soon as he had dined, presented himself at the hotel and asked for Mr. Chalonner.

He was amazed to find that gentleman already up and in a state of agitation that was very disquieting. But he brightened wonderfully at sight of his visitor, and drawing him inside the room, observed with trembling eagerness:

"I do not know why you have come back, but never was man more welcome. Mr. Brotherson has confessed—"

"Confessed!"

"Yes, he killed both women; my daughter and his neighbor, the washerwoman, with a—"

"Wait," broke in Sweetwater, eagerly. "let me tell you. And stooping, he whispered something in the other's ear."

Mr. Chalonner stared at him amazed, then slowly nodded his head.

"How came you to think—" he be-



The Airship Was Not There.

gan; but Sweetwater in his great anxiety interrupted him with a quick:

"Explanations will keep, Mr. Chalonner. What of the man himself? Where is he? That's the important thing now."

"He was in his room till early this morning writing letters, but he is not there now. The door is unlocked and I went in. From appearances I fear the worst. That is why your presence relieves me so. Where do you think he is?"

"In his hangar in the woods. Where else would he go to—"

"I have thought of that. Shall we start out alone or take witnesses with us?"

"We will go alone. Does Oswald anticipate—"

"He is sure. But he lacks strength to move. He lies on my bed in there.

Doris and her father are with him."

"We will not wait a minute. How the storm holds off. I hope it will hold off for another hour."

Mr. Chalonner made no reply. He had spoken because he felt compelled to speak, but it had not been easy for him, nor could any trifles move him now.

The town was up by this time and, though they chose the least frequented streets, they had to suffer from some encounters. It was a good half hour before they found themselves in the forest and in sight of the hangar. One look that way, and Sweetwater turned to see what the effect was upon Mr. Chalonner.

A murmur of dismay greeted him. The oval of the great lid stood up against the forest background.

"He has escaped," cried Mr. Chalonner.

But Sweetwater, laying a finger on his lip, advanced and laid his ear against the door. Then he cast a quick look aloft. Nothing was to be seen there. The darkness of storm in the heavens but nothing more.—Yes! now, a flash of vivid and destructive lightning!

The two men drew back and their glances crossed.

"Let us return to the highway," whispered Sweetwater; "we can see nothing here."

Mr. Chalonner, trembling very much, wheeled slowly about.

"Wait," enjoined Sweetwater. "First let me take a look inside."

Running to the nearest tree, he quickly climbed it, worked himself along a protruding branch and looked down into the open hangar. It was now so dark that details escaped him, but one thing was certain. The airship was not there.

Descending, he drew Mr. Chalonner hastily along. "He's gone," said he. "Let us reach the high ground as quickly as we can. I'm glad that Mr. Oswald Brotherson is not with us or—Miss Doris."

But this expression of satisfaction died on his lips. At the point where the forest road debouches into the highway, he had already caught a glimpse of their two figures. They were waiting for news, and the brother spoke at the instant he saw Sweetwater:

"Where is he? You've not found him or you wouldn't be coming alone. He cannot have gone up. He cannot manage it without an assistant. We must seek him somewhere else; in the forest or in our house at home. Ah!" The lightning had forked again.

"He's not in the forest and he's not in your home," returned Sweetwater. "He's aloft; the airship is not in the shed. And he can go up alone now. Then more slowly: "But he cannot come down."

They strained their eyes in a mad-dening search of the heavens. But the darkness had so increased that they could be sure of nothing.

Doris sank upon her knees. Suddenly the lightning flashed again, this time so vividly and so near that the whole heaven burst into fiery illumination above them and the thunder, crashing almost simultaneously, seemed for a moment to rock the world and bow the heavens towards them. Then a silence; then Sweetwater's whisper in Mr. Chalonner's ear:

"Take them away! I saw him; he was falling like a shot."

Mr. Chalonner threw out his arms, then steadied himself. Oswald was reeling; Oswald had seen too. But Doris was there. When the lightning flashed again, she was standing and Oswald was weeping on her bosom.

(THE END.)

For Roumania's Charity. Carmen Sylva, the poetess queen of Roumania, is issuing a new series of postage stamps to aid the charities in which she is interested. Unlike most stamps of this kind, the Roumanian queen's issue is good for all mailing purposes. The four designs of the new series will represent (1) the queen of Roumania spinning, the motto on the stamp being "God guide our hand;" (2) the queen weaving, motto "Woman weaves the future of the country;" (3) the queen nursing a wounded soldier, motto "The wounds dressed and the tears wiped away," and (4) an allegorical picture, motto, "But, glory, honor and peace to all that do good." Another set of stamps of similar character, issued in 1907, bore a picture representing the Princess Maria and her children receiving a poor family at the gates of their palace!

Harmonious Cobbler. Angriely the woman walked across the floor while the shoemaker listened to her unamused tread.

"Your hear that?" she said. "Creak, creak all the time. These shoes will drive me crazy. Will you give me my money back?"

"I'm afraid I can't do that," he said, "but I'll tell you what I will do. I will take one of those shoes back and give you another that will squeak in tune with the one you have left."