

THE CARUTHERS AFFAIR

By WILL HARBEN

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SYNOPSIS.

Minard Hendricks, great detective, just returned from Boston, finds awaiting him an unsigned typewritten letter directing him to apartments in Palace hotel, where he will find remains of Mr. Sheldon Caruthers—currently reported for past two weeks to be out of town. Detective seems to connect letter with attempt made on his own life some time previous. Goes with friend, Dr. Lampkin, to investigate. Upon search of Caruthers' apartments remains of cremated body and jeweled hand of victim are found in a vase. Hand bears marks of finger nails manured to sharp points. Lampkin recalls reports of a row between Caruthers and Arthur Gielow, both authors for hand of Dorothy Huntington, who is heiress to several millions should she marry Caruthers, unconditionally in case of Caruthers' death. Late that night Hendricks and Lampkin call at home of Miss Huntington. Dorothy shows detective typewritten letter, which was an invitation for herself and aunt to occupy with Count Bantini, Italian nobleman, his box at horse show, as he was called out of town by pressing business. She recalls Gielow had expressed before murder intense hatred for Caruthers and believes him guilty, yet decides to help him, and with her aunt goes to his studio. Gielow has fled. His servant, Henri, tells of overhearing confession to Bantini. Henri thought his master innocent. Hendricks, concealed in room, hears all this. Hendricks examines handwriting of this letter and says it is genuine. During a call on Serget Denham, detective of police department, Hendricks comes into possession of cuff with words written in blood over Gielow's name to effect that he was innocent, starving and confined. Going to Gielow's studio, Henri identifies cuff as his master's. Henri tells of strange influence Bantini had over Gielow. Hendricks comes to conclusion Bantini was the murderer, and through hypnotism made Gielow confess both in person to Henri and by letters to others. Hendricks and Lampkin go to Kola's retreat. Kola tells them Gielow is dead, and to prove his supernatural powers claims to go to the detective's home in his astral body and bring back a Bible, which is handed to Hendricks amidst a lot of occult balderdash. Kola warns detective an attempt is to be made on his life. Reaching home, Hendricks learns how nearly Kola deceived him when his mother tells of disappearance of Bible after one of Kola's calls during his absence in Boston. Coming now to Gielow's experiences, the story goes back to night of murder, when Bantini by his strange power abducted his victim. Bantini tells his prisoner he is in his power and how during three days of unconsciousness he had been used to write letters to Miss Huntington and the police. The imprisoned artist manages to loosen a stone in side of cell. Through this opening he pushes his cuff with his bloody message to the outer world. Serget Denham, not having known of Hendricks' connection with the affair, comes to him for advice. This brings out fact that cuff was found near palisades. Detective is now convinced of identity of Kola and Bantini, and with Denham and Lampkin, joined by Miss Huntington, who begs to accompany them, set out to rescue Gielow. Hendricks and Lampkin, leaving Denham and Miss Huntington in carriage, go into the old home. Kola's calls during his absence by Kola, and would have plunged to their death through trap door in floor had not Denham appeared. Kola is bound. By means of either the doctor decides to make his talkative.

CHAPTER XX.—CONTINUED.

"Good, good!" approved Hendricks, as Kola's body began to grow limp. "Give him some more!" "Oh, no, he must not be too deeply under it," objected Lampkin. "He is just right now. Let him loose, I'll manage him as easily as a rowboat downstream. Now, if he will only talk!" Kola's face was bloodless. For a moment there was no sound inside or outside of the house. Lampkin raised the towel a little, for the lips of the Indian were moving. A harsh laugh broke from the death-like face. "It's the wisdom of the east," chuckled Kola. "I'll never be suspected, and when Hendricks is out of the way, I shall be free. Yes, free, and rich, and as powerful as a king." There he paused. Lampkin held up his hand to warn the others not to speak, and in a distinct voice said: "But Gielow—will he be found?" "Never!" burst impulsively from Kola's lips. "No one else knows the secret door. No one would think of the head of the dragon." The eyes of Hendricks and the doctor met. Hendricks flashed knowingly, and he grunted and he turned and ran into the hall. A moment later Lampkin followed, finding the detective examining the walnut dragon at the foot of the stairs. "I believe on my life that the head of the thing unscrews," Hendricks exclaimed, excitedly. "See where it has been rubbed by use. By Jove, I have it!"

Grasping the head in his hands, Hendricks gave it a powerful wrench, and it began to turn. In a moment it came off, and they saw, protruding from a hollow tube in the neck of the dragon, a steel rod with a ring on its end. Hendricks tried to push the rod downward, but it resisted his efforts. Then, ascending the steps till he was above the ring, he pulled it steadily upward. A little bell inside the dragon rang. This was followed by a creaking sound under the hall floor, and a tall gilt-framed plate-glass mirror in the brick wall near by leaned outward on one side. Running to it, Lampkin pulled it out and found that it turned on hidden hinges. And behind the mirror was revealed a doorway and a narrow flight of stairs leading downward into the darkness. There was a lantern on the first step, and Hendricks lit it, and holding it above his head he hurried down the stairs. At first the steps were of wood, but deeper down they were of unheaven stone.

Perhaps 40 feet from the surface of the earth, they found themselves in a long, narrow cavern, which wound about like a serpent's trail. And when they had gone perhaps 200 yards from their starting point they found themselves stopped by a brick wall in which was a rusty iron door. The door was locked, but a bunch of keys hung on a hook near by. "We have found him," said Lampkin. Hendricks nodded as he began to try the keys in the lock. After many failures, the door was finally opened, and in the combined light of the lantern and a streak of daylight that came in at a tiny crack in the rock, they saw, crouching in a corner, a white-faced creature with wailing eyes and disheveled hair.

"Who is it?" came from his lips in a rasping whisper. "Friends," said Hendricks. Gielow tried to rise, but fell backward. "In God's name—water!" he gasped. "Here, drink this first," said Lampkin, kneeling and drawing out from his pocket a flask of brandy. Gielow tried to take the bottle in his hands, but his fingers were too stiff from cold. Dr. Lampkin placed the bottle to his lips, and Gielow drank.

"Oh, thank God!" he said. "Is it true, are you friends?" "This is Mr. Minard Hendricks," answered Lampkin, with a glance at the holder of the lantern, "and Miss Huntington is outside in a carriage waiting to take you home." "Oh, no, really?" cried the prisoner, and then he lowered his head to his knees and laughed like a happy child. "It seems like years since I came here." He tried again to rise, but Lampkin stopped him.

"You must first drink some of this liquid food," he said. As he opened the bottle, Gielow eyed it like a famished beast. As he was taking it from a spoon from the doctor's hands, Hendricks peered out through the crack. "I have the solution now," he remarked. "In cutting the new road along here, they came within a few feet of chopping the end off this cavern. The blasting caused the crack. He must have thrust his message through it."

Gielow nodded as he ate, but he made no comment. "Now, that is enough for the present," said Lampkin. "We must get you out of here and warm you up before we do anything else." They raised the artist to his feet, and bore him slowly between them along the dark passage, and up the dark stairs to the hall above. "We'll take him straight to Kola's room and wrap him up," said the doctor.

CHAPTER XXI.

When they had put him in a big, soft bed in the chamber adjoining Kola's reception room, Hendricks went out to the carriage. The green curtains was still down, but he saw that it was pulled aside, and that the occupant was peering cautiously out. When she saw him coming, she opened the carriage door and looked anxiously into his face. Hendricks smiled. "Gielow is safe," he said. "He is weak, of course, but he will pull through all right."

She seemed unable either to answer or to move. The stare of her eyes seemed to indicate doubt on her part as to the verity of the news. "I think you might come in, if you wish," added Hendricks. "We have put him to bed, and the doctor is preparing something warm for him."

Without a word, she got out of the carriage, and dumbly followed him. As they were ascending the steps, she paused half-way up the flight and looked at Hendricks pitifully, and then down at her feet. Her knees bent and she clutched his arm. "I—I don't know what's the matter with me," she faltered. "I don't seem able to move. Oh, please pardon my weakness."

"It's the shock," said Hendricks, almost tenderly. "You must try to calm yourself. All the trouble is over, you know, and the prisoner is in chains." "I thought something serious had happened," she said, slowly recovering. "I heard the crash, and then, as you did not appear, and the sergeant remained, I thought something was wrong." "Perhaps you had better go back to

the carriage and not try to go in," suggested Hendricks.

The remark seemed to rouse her to action. "Oh, no, I must see him! I can help," and, releasing his arm, she mounted the steps unaided.

Hendricks led her to the door of the room where they had taken Gielow. Lampkin appeared on the threshold. "He's begging to see you, Miss Huntington," said he. He pushed the door open, and when she had gone in he closed it and stood facing Hendricks. For a moment they looked into each other's eyes without speaking. Then Hendricks turned away abruptly.

He went into a little alcove off the big reception-room, and, glancing at Denham and the sleeping Indian, he rang the telephone.

He ordered from the nearest police station a patrol wagon, for the prisoner, and an ambulance, with all the comforts available, for the transportation of an invalid. Then he became and looked down at Kola's face.

"I presume you found Gielow pretty bad off," remarked Denham. There was something in his tone which showed vast respect for Hendricks.

Hendricks nodded, and then he stretched his hand over Kola to the young officer.

"My boy, you saved three lives this morning, and showed the sort of stuff you are made of. I shall never forget you. You won't lose by it. I shall speak to your chief about you. If he ever goes back on you, or you need employment, come to me."

Denham flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Thank you, Mr. Hendricks," he said, feelingly.

At this juncture the Indian opened his eyes and stared fixedly at Hendricks. "I hate you, Hendricks," were his first words.

"Flies seem to do the same thing in the summer," answered Hendricks, drily. "but I manage to get along. I am not bald-headed."

"If you will guarantee safety to me," said Kola, after a moment's deliberation, "I will restore Gielow to you. He may be alive yet, but if I do



"WE HAVE FOUND HIM"

not reveal the secret of his hiding-place he will never see the light of day. I tell you I am positively the only living possessor of the secret."

Hendricks' face wore a comical expression. He glanced at Denham and said:

"Rich, isn't it?" Denham nodded, and Kola's bend-like eyes rolled back and forth wonderingly as his gaze vibrated between them.

"It is not an unreasonable request," said he.

"You forget," replied Hendricks, suavely, "that you have already courteously volunteered all the information necessary. You are a gem, Count Bantini. You actually do so many good deeds that you forget about them. You, of course, remember telling us about the head of the dragon, the lantern, the stone stairs, the long cavern, and the cell at the end."

Kola's face darkened. He reflected a moment and then said:

"I see you made me talk unconsciously. I acknowledge that you have undone me completely."

He sat up and his handcuffs clanked as he folded his hands over his knee. "Is Gielow alive?" he questioned.

"Thanks, yes," said Hendricks. "Well, I am glad of that, anyway. He stood between me and my desire, that's all I had against him."

Half an hour later Hendricks went out on the veranda and looked down the road. Dr. Lampkin was there walking back and forth.

"How's Gielow?" asked the detective.

"Tip-top," answered the doctor. "He'll be at his easel in a week. How's the prisoner?"

"Resigned and meek as a lamb," answered the detective. "He made a complete confession to Denham and myself just now."

"And I presume the mystery is solved at last," remarked Lampkin, tentatively. "I must say, however, that I am still in the dark on one or two features of the case. For instance, it seems an unnecessary thing for Kola to cremate the body and inform you

anonymously that the remains would be found in the hotel."

"That seems to have been an after-thought, and there was a reason for it," explained Hendricks. "He was spending a pleasant evening with his victim in Caruthers' rooms and committed the deed sooner than he really intended. Caruthers, it appears, was just beginning to suspect that Kola was not an Italian, and a dispute arose between them. Kola struck him a single blow in the temple, and he fell dead without a sound or blood."

"Ah, I see!" exclaimed Lampkin. "Then," went on Hendricks, "Kola feared, as he was seen to enter Caruthers' rooms, that he would be suspected, so he quickly resorted to the excellent scheme of making it appear that his victim had suddenly left the city."

"He first crowded Caruthers' body into one of his big trunks and deliberately went down to the street and employed a passing baggageman to come up for the trunk, pretending that it was his. Without attracting notice, he got the trunk delivered at his own rooms in town, and early the next morning had it removed out here by his Indian servant. He next dropped Caruthers' valet a note from Philadelphia, which was mailed in that city by an eastern confederate, and later he forged another communication to Miss Huntington."

"But, in the meantime, he was thinking of some unique means of totally destroying the body. He ended by cutting it up and reducing it to ashes by oxy-hydrogen flame, all except the hand, which, for a time, escaped his notice. He was about to throw the ashes away when he ran across the hand. Then the thought occurred to him that unless it was proved beyond doubt that Caruthers was actually dead there would be endless litigation before Miss Huntington could come into her uncle's estate. As you know, that would not have suited Kola, so he put the ashes and hand in the vase, and managed to get them into Caruthers' apartments. His first idea was that it would be taken for the work of a crank, hence his cranky letter to me. His next inspiration was to hypnotize Gielow and make him confess and flee, but for a week the artist persistently avoided him, and it was not till Kola discovered that I was back from Boston that he accidentally met the artist and accomplished his purpose."

"But why did Kola make the first attempt on your life?" asked the doctor. "Because he had already decided to murder Caruthers, marry the heiress and continue his role of Italian count in New York, and was afraid that I would sooner or later recognize him."

"But the second attempt on your life?" questioned Lampkin.

"Was because he found out that I was at the rooms of Count Bantini the morning after Gielow's apparent flight, and was afraid I would finally discover his disguise. I think from the fact that he avoided me during that time that he was afraid of me, but after he played the Bible trick on us I think he believed he could frighten me out of following up the Bantini clew and into a belief in the guilt of Gielow. However, his fears got the best of him and he decided to kill both you and me by means of his dead-fall."

Just then there was the sound of a going down the road and the patrol wagon dashed into view.

"The ambulance will follow pretty soon," remarked Hendricks. "Doctor, I am going to leave you and Miss Huntington with the patient while Denham and I go in with our booty."

"That will be all right," answered Lampkin. "We'll look after him."

Denham and Hendricks had led Kola out to the wagon and put him in, and Hendricks was about to climb in after him when Dr. Lampkin came to the door and signaled to Hendricks to come back.

"Miss Huntington wants to see you before you go," he said.

A sheepish expression was mingled with the flush on Hendricks' face as he entered the room where Gielow lay awake and smiling contentedly. Miss Huntington rose from the bedside and held out her hand.

"I couldn't let you go without speaking to you," she said, her eyes filling. "I shall never forget your goodness as long as I live. You are the best friend I ever had. Arthur," she said, turning to Gielow, "I cannot say what I want to say. I am going to kiss him." And she put her arms around the neck of the detective and kissed him on the lips.

Hendricks grew very red in the face, and saying something about wishing he had it all to do over again, he backed from the room. As he turned at the threshold he stumbled over a rug and almost fell into Lampkin's arms.

The doctor braced him up with a hand on each of his shoulders, and grinned and smacked his lips significantly. But Hendricks only swore at him, waxed redder in the face and descended to the wagon and crawled in beside Kola.

THE END.

About the Size of It. Willie—Say, pa, the paper says the wedding was a very quiet affair; what does it mean by that?

Pa—I must refer to the marriage of a deaf and dumb couple, my son.—Chicago Daily News.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

If there is one thing on which the housewife prides herself, it is that of having her laundering done nicely, so that the wearing apparel may be the admiration of all. The washing is a small matter, any one almost can do that, but to have the linens present that flexible and glossy appearance after being ironed requires a fine quality of starch. Ask your grocer for a coupon book, which will enable you to get the first two packages of this new starch—"Red Cross" trade mark brand, also two of the children's Shakespeare pictures painted in twelve beautiful colors as natural as life, or the Twentieth Century Girl Calendar, all absolutely free. This is one of the grandest offers ever made to introduce "Red Cross" laundry starch, J. C. Hubinger's latest invention.

Another on Ireland. Sir Thomas Lipton is himself authority for a story that relates to his experience on the Shamrock when lying in Southampton water. Observing a quartette of bargemen rowing their clumsy craft in perilous proximity to the yacht's delicate sides, he called out, pleasantly: "Hi, my men! Keep away a bit, will you?" One of the bargemen ceased rowing and eyed the cup challenger critically. "Wot do ye call that 'ere thing you're on?" he demanded. "This," replied Sir Thomas, courteously, "is the yacht Shamrock." "Bill," sniffed the bargee, turning to his neighbor on the next thwart, "e calls 'er the Shamrock. Another bloomin' injustice to Ireland."—N. Y. Commercial Advertiser.

Our Own Volcano. "When I was on the Pacific coast," remarked the new boarder, "I noticed several United States army boxes packed with sarsaparilla. Do you think they could have large mercantile establishments?" "No," responded the man in black suspenders, "they were probably shipped to Hawaii." "Hawaii?" "Yes, you know there is a little eruption there."—Chicago Evening News.

Some Other Plan Necessary. "The trusts," exclaimed the excited individual, who, so to speak, was at the oratorical bat, "must be frozen out!" The trust trustee in the audience slapped the typhoid fever microbe on the back and laughed derisively. "He isn't up with the latest discoveries in science," it said. "He doesn't know that we can stand a temperature of 312 degrees below zero!"—Chicago Tribune.

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