

# SERIAL STORY

## BLINDFOLDED

A Mystery Story of San Francisco

BY EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT

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### SYNOPSIS.

Giles Dudley arrived in San Francisco to join his friend and distant relative Henry Wilton, whom he was to assist in an important and mysterious task, and who accompanied Dudley on the ferry boat trip into the city. The remarkable resemblance of the two men is noted and commented on by passengers on the ferry. They see a man with snake eyes, which sends a thrill through Dudley. Wilton postpones an explanation of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but occurrences cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. Wilton leaves Giles in their room, with instruction to await his return and shoot any one who tries to enter. Outside there is heard shouts and curses and the noise of a quarrel. Henry rushes in and at his request the roommates quickly exchange clothes, and he hurries out again. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help," and he runs out to find some one being assaulted by a half dozen men. He summons a policeman but they are unable to find any trace of a crime. Giles returns to his room and hunts for some evidence that might explain his strange mission. He finds a map which he endeavors to decipher. Dudley is summoned to the morgue and there finds the dead body of his friend, Henry Wilton. And thus Wilton dies without ever explaining to Dudley the puzzling work he was to perform in San Francisco.

### CHAPTER V. Doddridge Knapp.

It was past ten o'clock of the morning when the remembrance of the mysterious note I had received the preceding night came on me. I took the slip from my pocket, and read its contents once more. It was perplexing enough, but it furnished me with an idea. Of course I could not take money intended for Henry Wilton. But here was the first chance to get at the heart of this dreadful business. The writer of the note, I must suppose, was the mysterious employer. If I could see her I could find the way of escape from the dangerous burden of Henry Wilton's personality and mission.

But which bank could be meant? The only names I knew were the Bank of California, whose failure in the previous year had sent echoes even into my New England home, and the Anglo-Californian Bank, on which I held a draft. The former struck me as the more likely place of appointment, and after some skillful navigating I found myself at the corner of California and Sansome streets, before the building through which the wealth of an empire had flowed.

I watched closely the crowd that passed in and out of the treasure-house, and assumed what I hoped was an air of prosperous indifference to my surroundings.

No one appeared to notice me. There were eager men and cautious men, and men who looked secure and men who looked anxious, but neither man nor woman was looking for me. Plainly I had made a bad guess. A hasty walk through several other banks that I could see in the neighborhood gave no better result, and I had to acknowledge that this chance of penetrating the mystery was gone. I speculated for the moment on what the effects might be. To neglect an order of this kind might result in the withdrawal of the protection that had saved my life, and in turning me over to the mercies of the banditti who thought I knew something of the whereabouts of a boy.

As I reflected thus, I came upon a crowd massed about the steps of a great granite building in Pine Street; a whirlpool of men, it seemed, with cross-currents and eddies, and from the whole rose the murmur of excited voices. It was the Stock Exchange, the gambler's paradise, in which millions were staked, won and lost, and ruin and affluence walked side by side. As I watched the swaying, shouting mass with wonder and amusement, a thrill shot through me. Upon the steps of the building, amid the crowd of brokers and speculators, I saw a tall, broad-shouldered man of fifty or fifty-five, his face keen, shrewd and hard, broad at the temples and tapering to a strong jaw, a yellow-gray mustache and imperial hair-hiding and half-revealing the firm lines of the mouth, with the mark of the wolf strong upon the whole. It was a face never to be forgotten as long as I should hold memory at all. It was the face I had seen twelve hours before in the lantern flash in the dreadful alley, with the cry of murder ringing in my ears. Then it was lighted by the fierce fires

of rage and hatred, and marked with the chagrin of baffled plans. Now it was cool, good-humored, alert for the battle of the Exchange that had already begun. But I knew it for the same, and was near crying aloud that here was a murderer.

I clutched my nearest neighbor by the arm, and demanded to know who it was.

"Doddridge Knapp," replied the man civilly. "He's running the Cholera deal now, and if I could only, guess which side he's on, I'd make a fortune in the next few days. He's the King of Pine Street."

While I was looking at the King of the Street and listening to my neighbor's tales of his operations, Doddridge Knapp's eyes met mine. To my amazement there was a look of recognition in them. Yet he made no sign, and in a moment was gone.

This, then, was the enemy I was to meet! This was the explanation of Detective Coogan's hint that I should be safer in jail than free on the streets to face this man's hatred or revenge.

I must have stood in a daze on the busy street, for I was roused by some one shaking my arm with vigor.

"Come! are you asleep?" said the man, speaking in my ear. "Can't you hear?"

"Yes, yes," said I, rousing my attention.

"The chief wants you." His voice was low, almost a whisper.

"The chief? Who? Where?" I asked. "At the City Hall?" I jumped to the conclusion that it was, of course, the chief of police, on the scent of the murder.

"No. Of course not. In the second office, you know."

This was scarcely enlightening. Doubtless, however, it was a summons from my unknown employer.

"I'll follow you," I said promptly.

"I don't think I'd better go," said the messenger dubiously. "He didn't say anything about it, and you know he's rather—"

"Well, I order it," I cut in decisively. "I may need you."

I certainly needed him at that moment if I was to find my way.

"Go ahead a few steps," I said.

My tone and manner impressed him, and he went without another



word. I sauntered after him with as careless an air as I could assume. My heart was beating fast. I felt that I was close to the mystery and that the next half hour would determine whether I was to take up Henry Wilton's work or to find my way in safety back to my own lane and person.

My unconscious guide led the way along Montgomery Street into an office building, up a flight of stairs, and into a back hallway.

"Stay a moment," I said, as he had his hand on the door knob. "On second thoughts you can wait down stairs."

He turned back, and as his footsteps echoed down the stair I opened the door and entered the office.

As I crossed the threshold my heart gave a great bound, and I stopped short. Before me sat Doddridge Knapp, the King of the Street, the man for whom above all others in the world I felt a loathing and fear.

Doddridge Knapp finished signing his name to a paper on his desk before he looked up.

"Come in and sit down," he said. The voice was alert and business like—the voice of a man accustomed to command. But I could find no trace of feeling in it, nothing that could tell me of the hatred or desperate purpose that would inspire such a tragedy as I had witnessed, or warn me of danger to come.

"Do you hear?" he said impatiently; "shut the door and sit down. Just spring that lock, will you? We might be interrupted."

I was not at all certain that I should not wish very earnestly that he might be interrupted in what Brete Harte would call the "subsequent proceedings." But I followed his directions.

Doddridge Knapp was not less impressive at close view than at long range. The strong face grew stronger when seen from the near distance.

"My dear Wilton," he said, "I've come to a place where I've got to trust somebody, so I've come back to you." The voice was oily and per-

suasive, but the keen gray eyes shot out a glance from under the bushing eyebrows that thrilled me as a warning.

"It's very kind of you," I said, swallowing my astonishment with an effort.

"Well," said Knapp, "the way you handled that Ophir matter was perfectly satisfactory; but I'll tell you that it's on Mrs. Knapp's say-so, as much as on your own doings, that I selected you for this job."

"I'm much obliged to Mrs. Knapp," I said politely. I was in deep waters. It was plainly unsafe to do anything but drift.

"Oh, you can settle that with her at your next call," he said good humoredly.

The jaded nerves of surprise refused to respond further. If I had received a telegram informing me that the dispute over the presidency had been settled by shelving both Hayes and Tilden and giving the unanimous vote of the electors to me, I should have accepted it as a matter of course. I took my place unquestioningly as a valued acquaintance of Doddridge Knapp's and a particular friend of Mrs. Knapp's.

Yet it struck me as strange that the keen-eyed King of the Street had failed to discover that he was not talking to Henry Wilton, but to some one else who resembled him. There were enough differences in features and voice to distinguish us among intimate friends, though there were not enough to be seen by casual acquaintances. I had the key in the next sentence he spoke.

"I have decided that it is better this time to do our business face to face. I don't want to trust messengers on this affair, and even cipher notes are dangerous,—confoundedly dangerous."

Then we had not been close acquaintances.

"Oh, by the way, you have that other cipher yet, haven't you?" he asked.

"No, burnt it," I said unblushingly.

"That's right," he said. "It was best not to take risks. Of course you understand that it won't do for us to be seen together."

"Certainly not," I assented.

"I have arranged for another office. Here's the address. Yours is Room 15. I have the key to 17, and 16 is vacant between with a 'To Let' sign on it. They open into each other. You understand?"

"Perfectly," I said.

"You will be there by nine o'clock for your orders. If you get none by twelve, there will be none for the day."

"If I can't be there, I'll let you know." I was off my guard for a moment, thinking of the possible demands of Henry's unknown employer.

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Doddridge Knapp shortly. His voice, so smooth and businesslike a moment before, changed suddenly to a growl. His heavy eyebrows came down, and from under them flashed a dangerous light. "You will be there when I tell you, young man, or you'll have to reckon with another sort of customer than the one you've been dealing with. This matter requires prompt and strict obedience to orders. One slip may ruin the whole plan."

"You can depend on me," I said with assumed confidence. "Am I to have any discretion?"

"None whatever."

I had thus far been able to get no hint of his purpose. If I had not known what I knew, I should have supposed that his mind was concentrated on the apparent object before him—to secure the zeal and fidelity of an employee in some important business operation.

"And what am I to do?" I asked.

"Be a capitalist," he said with an ironical smile. "Buy and sell what I tell you to buy and sell. Keep under cover, but not too much under cover. You can pick your own brokers. Better begin with Bockstein and Eppner, though. Your checks will be honored at the Nevada Bank. Oh, here's a cipher in case I want to write you. I suppose you'll want some ready money."

Doddridge Knapp was certainly a liberal provider, for he shoved a handful of twenty-dollar gold pieces across the desk in a way that made my eyes open.

"By the way," he continued, "I don't think I have your signature, have I?"

"No, sir," I replied with prompt confidence.

"Well, just write it on this slip then. I'll turn it into the bank for your identification. You can take the check-book with you."

"Anything more?"

"That's all," he replied with a nod of dismissal. "Maybe it's to-morrow—maybe it's next month."

And I walked out into Montgomery Street, bewildered among the conflicting mysteries in which I had been entangled.

### CHAPTER VI. A Night at Borton's.

Room 15 was a plain, comfortable office in a plain, comfortable building

on Clay Street, not far from the heart of the business district. It was on the second floor, and its one window opened to the rear, and faced a desolate assortment of back yards, rear walls, and rickety stairways. The floor had a worn carpet, and there was a desk, a few chairs and a shelf of law books. The place looked as though it had belonged to a lawyer in reduced circumstances, and I could but wonder how it had come into the possession of Doddridge Knapp, and what had become of the former occupant.

I tried to thrust aside a spirit of melancholy, and looked narrowly to the opportunities offered by the room for attack and defense. The walls were solidly built. The window-case showed an unusual depth for a building of that height. The wall had been put in to withstand an earthquake shock. The door opening into the hall, the door into Room 16, and the window furnished the three avenues of possible attack or retreat.

The depression of spirits that progressed with my survey of the room deepened into gloom as I flung myself into the arm-chair before the desk, and tried to plan some way out of the tangle in which I was involved. How was I, single-handed, to contend against the power of the richest man in the city, and bring home to him the murder of Henry Wilton? I could look for no assistance from the police. The words of Detective Coogan were enough to show that only the most convincing proof of guilt, backed by fear of public sentiment, could bring the department to raise a finger against him. And how could I hope to rouse that public sentiment? What would my word count against that of the King of the Street?

Where was the motive for the crime? Until that was made clear I could not hope to piece together the scraps of evidence into a solid structure of proof. And what motive could there be that would reconcile the Doddridge Knapp who sought the life of Henry Wilton, with the Doddridge Knapp of this morning, who was ready to engage him in his confidential business? And had I the right to accept any part in his business?

Fatigue and loss of sleep deepened the dejection of mind that oppressed me with these insistent questions, and as I vainly struggled against it, carried me at last into the oblivion of dreamless slumber.

The next I knew I was awaking to the sound of breaking glass. It was dark but for a feeble light that came from the window. Every bone in my body ached from a cramped position in which I had slept, and it seemed an age before I could rouse myself to act. It was, however, but a second before I was on my feet, revolver in hand, with the desk between me and a possible assailant.

Silence, threatening, oppressive, surrounded me. I stood listening, watching for the next move.

"I thought the transom was open," said a low voice, which still seemed to be struggling with suppressed laughter.

"I guess it woke him up," said another and harsher voice. "I heard a noise in there."

"You're certain he's there?" asked the first voice with another chuckle.

"Sure, Dicky. I saw him go in, and Porter and I have taken turns to watch ever since."

"Well! It's time he came out," said Dicky. "He can't be asleep after that racket. Say!" he called, Harry! What's the matter with you? If you're dead let us know."

They appeared friendly, but I hesitated in framing an answer. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

### BEARS EXPECT HARD WINTER.

Besides, Trees Are Putting on Extra Thick Bark.

Jim Tompkins, the Mt. Hood woodsman whose prediction last fall of a hard winter was verified, is again out with a pronouncement to the effect that the coming winter will disconcert that of last year and will in effect be a "peeler."

Mr. Tompkins again bases his prediction on the habits of the bears, which he states are more numerous in the lower valley than last year and are foraging almost in the dooryards of ranchers to fatten up for a "powerful spell of killin' weather."

"Them snowstorms we had last winter," says Mr. Tompkins, "won't be a marker to what we'll catch this winter. Every sign known to nature is hollerin' it out loud, and the bears comin' in close to town is a sure sign."

"Another is the bark on the trees. Whenever it gets as thick as it is now look out. Git plenty of wood, friends," concluded the woodsman, "and git it quick, fer you'll have use for it mighty sudden."—Portland Oregonian.

Edwin, aged three, who fondled his small cat overmuch and unwisely, appeared before his mother one day, his little face guiltily pained and a scratch upon his hand.

"What happened?" she asked. "I bent the kitty a little," he said, briely.

### Disposing of the Baby.

Little Freddy was the only child in the family. He had no little sisters or brothers to play with him, so when he was told that a baby sister had come, he was very happy. But he soon found that father and mother did not pay so much attention to him as they formerly had, and that baby seemed to be considered of more account than he. This worried Freddy; but he suddenly thought of something which would help him out of his trouble. Some weeks before his father had put a sign up: "Ashes to Give Away; Inquire Within." Freddy remembered that a man had come and taken the ashes away. So he got to work, and one day surprised his father by displaying another sign, hung in a prominent place: "A Baby to Give Away. Inquire of Freddy."

Laundry work at home would be much more satisfactory if the right Starch were used. In order to get the desired stiffness, it is usually necessary to use so much starch that the beauty and fineness of the fabric is hidden behind a paste of varying thickness, which not only destroys the appearance, but also affects the wearing quality of the goods. This trouble can be entirely overcome by using Defiance Starch, as it can be applied much more thinly because of its greater strength than other makes.

### Selfish Etiquette.

Some rules in an old book on etiquette seem to encourage a practice commonly called "looking out for number one." Here are two of them:

"When cake is passed, do not finger each piece, but with a quick glance select the best.

"Never refuse to taste of a dish because you are unfamiliar with it, or you will lose the taste of many a delicacy while others profit by your abstinence, to your lasting regret."—Youth's Companion.

### Deafness Cannot Be Cured

by local applications, as they cannot reach the diseased portion of the ear. There is only one way to cure deafness, and that is by constitutional remedies. Deafness is caused by an inflamed condition of the mucous lining of the Eustachian Tube. When this tube is inflamed you have a rumbling sound or imperfect hearing, and when it is entirely closed, deafness is the result, and unless the inflammation can be taken out and this tube restored to its normal condition, hearing will be destroyed forever; nine cases out of ten are caused by Catarrh, which is nothing but an inflamed condition of the mucous surfaces.

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### Successful Demonstration.

Romulus was founding Rome. "What I'm trying to do," he explained, "is to show that it is possible to start a big town without building it around an oil well or a copper mine."

At this inopportune moment Remus broke in with a remark that the new city was a Butte, all right; and he got it in the neck, as you find fully set forth in your Latin reader.

The extraordinary popularity of fine white goods this summer makes the choice of Starch a matter of great importance. Defiance Starch, being free from all injurious chemicals, is the only one which is safe to use on fine fabrics. Its great strength as a stiffener makes half the usual quantity of Starch necessary, with the result of perfect finish, equal to that when the goods were new.

Man fails to make his place good in the world unless he adds something to the common wealth.—Emerson.

## Truth and Quality

appeal to the Well-Informed in every walk of life and are essential to permanent success and creditable standing. Accordingly, it is not claimed that Syrup of Figs and Mixture of Senna is the only remedy of known value, but one of many reasons why it is the best of personal and family laxatives is the fact that it cleanses, sweetens and relieves the internal organs on which it acts without any debilitating after effects and without having to increase the quantity from time to time.

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