

# 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 shouting 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. In order to discover the secret mission his friend had entrusted to him, Dudley continues his disguise and permits himself to be known as Henry Wilton. Dudley is mistaken for Wilton, is employed by Knapp to assist in a stock brokerage deal.

#### CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

"We'll have to break down the door, I guess," said Dicky. "Something must have happened." And a resounding kick shook the panel. "Hold on!" I cried. "What's wanted?" "Oh," said Dicky sarcastically. "You've come to life again, have you?" "Well, I'm not dead yet."

street. Every one of them did the sailor-drunk act."

"Sure they weren't sailors?" "Well, when six coves goes up the same stairs trying the same dodge, all inside of ten minutes, I have a right to my suspicions. And Darby Meeker ain't been to sea yet that I know on."

"Darby Meeker!" exclaimed Dicky in a whisper. And he drew a whistle under his breath. "What do you think of that, Wilton? I had no idea he was back from that wild-goose chase you sent him on."

"It looks bad," I admitted cautiously. "I dare say he isn't in good temper."

"You'll have to settle with him for that piece of business," said Dicky with a chuckle.

I failed to see the amusing side of the prospect. I wished I knew what Mr. Meeker looked like.

The guard had melted away into the darkness without another word, and we hurried forward with due caution. Just past the next corner was a lighted room, and the sound of voices broke the quiet.

We pushed open the door and walked in. The room was large and dingy, the ceiling low. Tables were scattered about the sanded floor. A bar took up the side of the room next the entrance and a general air of disreputability filled the place.

About the room, some at the tables, some at the bar, were numbers of stout, rough-looking men, with a few Greek fishermen and two or three sailors.

Behind the bar sat a woman whose appearance in that place almost startled me. She might have been nearing seventy, and a hard and evil life had left its marks on her bent frame and her gaunt face. Her leathery cheeks were lined deep, and a hawk-like nose emphasized the unpleasant suggestions conveyed by her face and figure. But the most remarkable feature about her was her eyes. There was no trace of age in them. Bright and keen as the eyes of a rat, they gave me an unpleasant thrill as I felt her gaze fixed upon me when I entered the door, arm in

I saw in my inner vision the man of the serpent glance who had chilled my spirit when I had first put foot in the city. It flashed on me in an instant that this man was the same man disguised, who has ventured into the midst of his enemies to see what he might learn of their plans.

As I watched Dicky advance and greet the new-comer with apparent inquiry, a low, harsh voice behind gave me a start of surprise.

"This is your wine, I think"—and a lean, wrinkled arm passed over my shoulder, and a wrinkled face came near my own.

I turned quickly. It was Mother Borton, leering at me with no apparent interest but in her errand.

"What are you doing here?" asked the crone in a voice still lower. "You're not the one they take you to be, but you're none the less in danger. What are you doing with his looks, and in this place? Look out for that man you're with, and the other. Yes, sir," her voice rose. "A small bottle of the white; in a minute, sir."

I understood her as Dicky and the new-comer came to the table and took seats opposite. I commanded my face to give no sign of suspicion, but the warning put me on the alert. I had come on the supposition that I was to meet the band to which Henry Wilton belonged. Instead of being among friends, however, it seemed now that I was among enemies.

"It's all right," said Dicky carelessly. "He's been sent."

"That's lucky," said I with equal unconcern. "We may need an extra hand before morning."

The new-comer could not repress a triumphant flash in the serpent eyes. "I'm the one for your job," he said hoarsely, his face as impassive as a stone wall.

"What do you know about the job?" I asked suspiciously.

"Only what I've been told," he answered.

"And that is—"

"That it's a job for silence, secrecy, and—"

"Spondulicks," said Dicky with a laugh, as the other hesitated for the word.

"Just so," said the man.

"And what else?" I continued, pressing him firmly.

"Well, he admitted hoarsely, "I learned as how there was to be a change of place to-night, and I might be needed."

I looked at him inquiringly. Perhaps I was on the threshold of knowledge of this cursed business from the mouth of the enemy.

"I heard as how the boy was to be put in a safer place," he said, wagging his head with affected gravity.

Some imp put it into my brain to try him with an unexpected bit of news.

"Oh," I said coolly, "that's all attended to. The change was made yesterday."

The effect of this announcement was extraordinary. The man started with an oath.

"The hell you say!" he exclaimed in a low, smooth voice, far different from the harsh tone he had used thus far. Then he leaped to his feet, with uncontrollable rage.

"Tricked—by God!" he shouted impulsively, and smote the table with his fist.

His outburst threw the room into confusion. Men sprang from their chairs. Glasses and bottles fell with clinking crash. Oaths and shouts arose from the crowd.

"Damn you, I'll have it out of you!" said the man with suppressed fury, his voice once again smooth and low. "Where is the boy?"

He smote the table again; and with that stroke the false beard fell from his chin and cheek, and exposed the malignant face, distorted with rage. A feeling of horrible repulsion came over me, and I should have struck at that serpent's head but for a startling occurrence. As he spoke, a wild scream rose upon the air, and as it echoed through the room the lights went out.

The scream was repeated, and after an instant's silence there rose a chorus of shouts and oaths, mingled with the crash of tables and the clink of breaking glass and crockery, as the men in the room fought their way to the door.

"Oh, my God, I'm out!" came in a shriek out of the darkness and clamor; and there followed the flash of a pistol and a report that boomed like a cannon in that confined place.

My eyes had not been idle after the warning of Mother Borton, and in an instant I had decided what to do. I had figured out what I conceived to be the plan of the house, and thought I knew a way of escape. There were two doors at the rear of the room, facing me. One led, as I knew, to the kitchen; the other opened, I reasoned, on a stair to the lodging-room above.

Before the scream that accompanied the extinction of the lights had died away, I had made a dive beneath the table, and, lifting with all my might, had sent it crashing over with my enemy under it. With one leap I cleared the remaining table that lay between me and the door. And with the clamor behind me, I turned the

knob and bounded up the stairs, three steps at a time.

#### CHAPTER VII. Mother Borton.

The noise of the struggle below continued. Yells and curses rose from the maddened men. Three shots were fired in quick succession, and a cry of "Oh, my Lord!" penetrated through the closed door with the sound of one sorely hurt.

I lingered for a little, listening to the tumult. I was in a strange and dangerous position. Enemies were behind me. There were friends, too, but I knew no way to tell one from the other, and my ignorance had nearly brought me to my death. I hesitated to move, but I could not remain in the open hall; and as the sounds of disturbance from below subsided, I felt my way along the wall and moved cautiously forward.

I had progressed perhaps twenty steps when a door, against which my hand pressed, yielded at the touch and swung slowly open. I strove to stop it, for the first opening showed a dim light within. But the panel gave no hold for my fingers, and my efforts to close the door only swung it open the faster. I drew back a little into the shadow, for I hesitated to dash past the sight of any who might occupy the room.

"Come in!" called a harsh voice.

I hesitated. Behind, the road led to the eating-room with its known dangers. A dash along the hall for the front door meant the raising of an alarm, and probably a bullet as a discourager of burglary. Should I escape this, I could be certain of a warm reception from the enemies on watch outside. Prudence lay in facing the one rather than risking the many. I accepted the invitation and walked into the room.

"I was expecting you," said the harsh voice composedly. "Good evening."

"Good evening," I returned gravely, swallowing my amazement as best I could.

By the table before me sat Mother Borton, contemplating me as calmly as though this meeting were the most commonplace thing in the world. A candle furnished a dim, flickering light that gave to her hard wicked countenance a diabolic leer that struck a chill to my blood.

"Excuse me," I said, "I have lost my way, I fear."

"Not at all," said Mother Borton. "You are in the right place."

"I was afraid I had intruded," I said apologetically.

"I expected you," she repeated. "Shut the door."

I glanced about the room. There was no sign of another person to be seen, and no other door. I obeyed her.

"You might as well sit down," she said with some petulance. "There's nothing up here to hurt you." There was so much meaning in her tone of the things that would hurt me on the floor below that I hastened to show my confidence in her, and drew up a chair to the table.

"At your service," I said, leaning before her with as much an appearance of jaunty self-possession as I could muster.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" she asked grimly.

What should I answer? Could I tell her the truth?

"Who are you?" she repeated impatiently, gazing on me. "You are not Wilton. Tell me. Who are you?"

The face, hard as it was, seemed with the record of a rough and evil life, as it appeared, had yet a kindly look as it was turned on me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### TERRORS OF BALLOONING.

Not to the Aeronaut, but to the Man on Earth Below Him.

It must be more than two years ago that I called attention in this column to the danger and nuisance that would be likely to ensue if ballooning became popular, but it is only recently that the public have awakened to the fact that the possibilities mentioned are likely to become stern realities.

Already we read of people quietly lounging in their gardens being well-nigh blinded by showers of sand, of conservatories being smashed, of houses unroofed and chimneys demolished, of trees uprooted, of fences damaged and of cattle injured by the action of the grapnel.

Of course, as ballooning becomes more general such accidents will be more frequent and more serious. An inconsiderate aeronaut is far more difficult to catch and control than a road-hog, because he may perpetuate his annoyances from an inaccessible distance. It is really high time—before this latest nuisance becomes so vast as to be uncontrollable—that stringent measures should be taken for its suppression.

But, I suppose till the prime minister has been hooked by a grappling-iron and dragged by the heels across a plowed field and through a couple of quick-set hedges, nothing will be done.—London Graphic.

**The Contrary Child.**  
Mrs. Popley—Little George won't take milk at all now. He used to take it but—

Mr. Popley (crossly)—No, and it's all on account of your imprudence.

"My imprudence?"

Mr. Popley—Yes, you allowed him to hear you say it was good for him.

There is more Catarrh in this section of the country than all other diseases put together, and until the last few years was supposed to be incurable. For a great many years doctors pronounced it a local disease and prescribed local remedies, and by constantly failing to cure with local treatment, pronounced it incurable. Science has proved Catarrh to be a constitutional disease, and therefore requires constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, Ohio, is the only Constitutional cure on the market. It is taken internally in doses from 10 drops to a teaspoonful. It acts directly on the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. They offer one hundred dollars for any case it fails to cure. Send for circulars and testimonials. Address: F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, Ohio. Sold by Druggists, 75c. Take Hall's Family Pills for constipation.

#### Self-Denial.

Margie is six years old and her family are Presbyterians. Some of Margie's little friends are Episcopallians, and Margie was much impressed with their Lenten sacrifices. On Ash Wednesday she announced that she would eat no candy for 40 days. A few hours later saw Margie with a large peppermint stick.

"Why, Margie," said her friend, "I thought you had given up candy for Lent."

"I did mean to," admitted Margie, "but I've changed my mind. I'm giving up profane language."—Montreal Herald.

#### In the Same Boat.

"We get some sad cases," said the attendant at the Lupton Lunatic asylum to the interested visitor, and opened the door of the first cell.

Inside was a man sitting on a three-legged stool, gazing vacantly at the wall.

"His is an unhappy story," said the attendant. "He was in love with a girl, but she married another man, and he lost his reason from grief."

They stole out softly, closing the door behind them, and proceeded to the next inmate.

This cell was thickly padded, and the man within was stark, staring mad.

"Who is this?" inquired the visitor. "This?" repeated the attendant. "This is the other man!"—Tatler.

#### IS IT POSSIBLE?



"And who were the people who first thought of music, auntie?"

"Why, child, they are considered to be prehistoric."

"Oh, auntie, how well you do remember!"

#### THE FIRST TASTE

Learned to Drink Coffee When a Baby.

If parents realized the fact that coffee contains a drug—caffeine—which is especially harmful to children, they would doubtless hesitate before giving the babies coffee to drink.

"When I was a child in my mother's arms and first began to nibble things at the table, mother used to give me sips of coffee. As my parents used coffee exclusively at meals I never knew there was anything to drink but coffee and water.

"And so I contracted the coffee habit early. I remember when quite young, the continual use of coffee so affected my parents that they tried roasting wheat and barley, then ground it in the coffee-mill, as a substitute for coffee.

"But it did not taste right and they went back to coffee again. That was long before Postum was ever heard of. I continued to use coffee until I was 27, and when I got into office work, I began to have nervous spells. Especially after breakfast I was so nervous I could scarcely attend to my correspondence.

"At night, after having coffee for supper, I could hardly sleep, and on rising in the morning would feel weak and nervous.

"A friend persuaded me to try Postum. My wife and I did not like it at first, but later when boiled good and strong it was fine. Now we would not give up Postum for the best coffee we ever tasted.

"I can now get good sleep, am free from nervousness and headaches. I recommend Postum to all coffee drinkers.

"There's a Reason."  
Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.



arm with Dicky. It was as though they had pierced me through, and had laid bare something I would have concealed. It was a relief to pass beyond her into a recessed part of the room where her gaze might waste itself on the back of my head.

"Mother Borton's up late to-night," said Dicky thoughtfully, as he ordered wine.

"You can't blame her for thinking that this crowd needs watching," I suggested with as much airiness as I could throw into my manner.

Dicky shook his head for a second, and then resumed his light-hearted, bantering way. Yet I could see that he was preplexed and anxious about something that had come to his attention on our arrival.

"You'll not want to attend to business till all the boys are here?" asked Dicky.

"Not unless there's something to be done," I responded dryly.

Dicky gave me a quick glance.

"Of course," he said with a laugh that was not quite easy, "not unless there's something to be done. But I thought there was something."

"You've got a fine mind for thinking, Dicky," I replied. "You'd better cultivate it."

"Well, they say there's nothing like society for that sort of cultivation," said Dicky, with another laugh. "They don't say what kind, but I've got a pretty good stock to choose from." He was at his ease in banter again, but it struck unpleasantly on me that there was something behind.

"Oh, here's a queer friend," he said suddenly, looking at the door. "I'd better speak to him on the matter of countersigns."

"By all means," I said, turning in my chair to survey the new-comer.

I saw the face for an instant. The man wore a sou'wester, and he had drawn his thick, rough coat up as the collar. Cheek and chin I could see were covered by a thick blonde beard. His movements were apparently clumsy, but his figure was lithe and sinuous. And his eyes! Once seen they never could be forgotten. At though he would hide his head under their glance, beard and sou'wester dropped away before my fancy, and

"Five—sixteen," croaked Dicky.

The man gave a visible start.

"Sixteen—five," he croaked in return.

"Any signs?" whispered Dicky.

"Six men went upstairs across the