

# 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. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help." 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 assumes his disguise and permits himself to be known as Henry Wilton. Dudley, mistaken for Wilton, is employed by Knapp to assist in a stock brokerage deal. Giles Dudley finds himself closeted in a room with Mother Borton who makes a confidant of him. He can learn nothing about the mysterious boy further than that it is Tim Terrill and Darby Meeker who are after him. He is told that "Dicky" Nahl is a traitor, playing both hands in the game. Giles finds himself locked in a room. Dudley gets his first knowledge of Decker, who is Knapp's enemy on the Board. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is stricken by the beauty of Luella, his daughter. He learns the note was forged. He is provided with four guards, Brown, Barkhouse, Fitzhugh and Porter. He learns there is to be no trouble about money as all expenses will be paid, the hire of the guards being paid by one "Richmond." The body of Henry Wilton is committed to the vault. Dudley responds to a note and visits Mother Borton in company with Policeman Corson.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

The four men within the room saluted me gravely and with Mother Borton's direction in mind I had no hesitation in calling each by his name. I was pleased to see that they were robust, vigorous fellows, and soon made my dispositions. Brown and Barkhouse were to attend me during daylight and Fitzhugh and Porter were to guard together at night. And, so much settled, I hastened to the office.

No sign of Doddridge Knapp disturbed the morning, and at the noon hour I returned to the room in the house of mystery that was still my only fixed abode.

All was apparently as I had left it, except that a letter lay on the table.

"I must get a new lock," was my comment, as I broke the seal. "This place is getting too public when every messenger has a key." I was certain that I had locked the door when Corson and I had come out on the evening before.

The letter was from my unknown employer, and read:

"Richmond has paid the men. Be ready for a move at any moment. Leave your address if you sleep elsewhere."

And now came three or four days of rest and quiet after the merry life I had been leading since my arrival in San Francisco.

In the interval I improved my time by getting better acquainted with the city. Emboldened by my body-guard, I slept for two nights in Henry's room, and with one to watch outside the door, one lying on a mattress just inside, and a new lock and bolt, I was free from disturbance.

Just as I had formed a wild idea of looking up Doddridge Knapp in his home, I came to the office in the morning to find the door into Room 16 wide open and the farther door ajar.

"Come in, Wilton," said the voice of the King of the Street; and I entered his room to find him busied over his papers, as though nothing had occurred since I had last met him.

"The market has had something of a vacation," I ventured, as he failed to speak.

"I have been out of town," he said shortly. "What have you done?"

"Nothing."

He gave a grunt of assent.

"You didn't expect me to buy up the market, did you?"

The yellow-gray mustache went up, and the wolf-eyes gleamed from beneath.

"I reckon it wouldn't have been a very profitable speculation," he replied.

Then he leaned back in his chair and looked meditatively at the wall.

"Have you heard anything more of Decker?" he asked.

"I've heard enough to satisfy me that he's the man who got the Omega stock."

"What other deal is he in?" asked the King of the Street.

"I don't know."

The King of the Street smiled indulgently.

"Well, you've got something to learn yet. I'll give you till next week to find the answer to that question."

I was convinced from his air that he had information on both these points himself, and was merely trying my knowledge.

"I'll not be back before next Wednesday," he concluded.

"Going away again?" I asked in surprise.

"I'm off to Virginia City," he replied after considering for a little.

"I'm not sure about Omega, after all—and there's another one I want to look into. You needn't mention my going."

When I come back we'll have a campaign that will raise the roof of every Board in town. No orders till then unless I telegraph you. That's all."

The King of the Street seemed straightforward enough in his statement of plans, and it did not occur to me to distrust him while I was in his presence. Yet, once more in my office, with the locked door between, I began to doubt, and tried to find some hidden meaning in each word and look.

#### CHAPTER XV. I Am in the Toils.

"Welcome once more, Mr. Wilton," said Mrs. Doddridge Knapp, holding out her hand. "Were you going to neglect us again?"

"Not at all, madam," said I with unblushing mendacity. "I am always at your command."

I had received a letter from Mrs. Bowser setting forth that I was wanted at the house of Doddridge Knapp, and her prolixity was such that I was unable to determine whether she or Mrs. Knapp or Luella wished to see me.

But as all three appeared to be concerned in it I pocketed pride and re-



"Really," she said, "I believe I shall begin to like you."

sentment, and made my bow with some nervous quavers at the Pine Street palace.

As I was speaking I cast my eyes furtively about the room. Mrs. Knapp interpreted my glance.

"She will be in presently." There was to my ear a trace of mocking laughter in her voice as she spoke, but her face betokened only a courteous interest.

"Thanks—I hope so," I said in a little confusion. I wished I knew whether she meant Luella or Mrs. Bowser.

"You got the note?" she asked.

"It was a great pleasure."

"Mrs. Bowser wished so much to see you again. She has been singing your praises—you were such an agreeable young man."

I cursed Mrs. Bowser in my heart.

"I believe there was some arrangement between you about a trip to see the sights of Chinatown. Mrs. Bowser was quite worried for fear you had forgotten it, so I gave her your address and told her to write you a note."

I had not been conscious of expecting anything from my visit, but at this bit of information I found that I had been building air-castles which had been invisible till they came tumbling about my ears. I could not look for Miss Knapp's company on such an expedition.

"Oh," said I, with an attempt to conceal my disappointment, "the matter had slipped my mind. I shall be most happy to attend Mrs. Bowser, or to see that she has a proper escort."

We had been walking about the room during this conversation, and at this point had come to an alcove, where Mrs. Knapp motioned me to a seat.

"I may not get a chance to talk with you alone again this evening," she continued, dropping her half-banter tone, "and you come so little now. What are you doing?"

"Keeping out of mischief."

"Yes, but how?" she persisted. "You used to tell me everything. Now you tell me nothing."

"Mr. Knapp's work—" I began.

"Oh, of course, I don't expect you to tell me about that. I know Mr. Knapp, and you're as close-mouthed as he, even when he's away."

"I should tell you anything of my own, but of course, another's—"

"I understand," Mrs. Knapp, sitting with hands clasped in her lap, gave me a quick look. "But there was something else. You were telling me about your adventures, you remember. You told me two or three weeks ago about the way you tricked Darby Meeker and sent him to 'Serria City.'" And she smiled at the recollection of Darby Meeker's discomfiture.

"Oh, yes," I said, with a laugh that sounded distressingly hollow to my ears. "That was a capital joke on Meeker."

"How did it turn out?" asked Mrs. Knapp with lively interest. "Did he get back?"

I decided promptly on a judicious amount of truth.

"Yes, he got back boiling with wrath and loaded to the guards with threats—that is, I heard so from my men. I didn't see him myself, or you might have found the rest of it in the newspaper."

"What did he do? Tell me about it." Mrs. Knapp gave every evidence of absorbed interest.

"Well, he laid a trap for me at Borton's, put Terrill in as advance guard and raised blue murder about the place." And then I went on to give a carefully amended account of my first night's row at Borton's, and with an occasional question Mrs. Knapp had soon extorted from me a fairly full account of my doings.

"It is dreadful for you to expose yourself to such dangers."

I was privately of her opinion.

"Oh, that's nothing," said I airily. "A man may be killed any day by a brick falling from a building, or by slipping on an orange peel on the crossing."

"But is dreadful to court death so. Yet," she mused, "if I were a man I could envy you your work. There is romance and life in it, as well as danger. You are doing in the nineteenth century and in the midst of civilization what your forefathers may have done in the days of chivalry."

"It is a fine life," I said dryly. "But it has its drawbacks."

"But while you live no one can harm the child," she said. There was inquiry in her tone, I thought.

I suppressed a start of surprise. I had avoided mention of the boy. Henry had trusted Mrs. Knapp further than I had dreamed.

"He shall never be given up by me," I replied with conviction.

"That is spoken like a true, brave man," said Mrs. Knapp with an admiring look.

"Thank you," I said modestly.

"Another life than yours depends on your skill and courage. That must give you strength," she said softly.

"It does indeed," I replied. I was thinking of Doddridge Knapp's life.

"But here come Luella and Mrs. Bowser," said Mrs. Knapp. "I see I shall lose your company."

My heart gave a great bound, and I turned to see the queenly grace of Luella Knapp as she entered the room in the train of Mrs. Bowser.

Was it fancy, or had she grown paler and thinner since I had last seen her? surely those dark hollows under her eyes that told of worry and lost sleep were not there when her brightness had chained my admiration.

"Luella!" called Mrs. Knapp. I fancied she gave a low, musical laugh as she spoke, yet the glance showed me that her face was calm and serious. "Luella, here is some one you will like to see."

Luella Knapp turned and advanced. What was the look that lighted up her face and sparkled from her eye? Before I could analyze the magnetic thrill that came from it, it was gone. A flush passed over her face and died away as she came.

"You honor our poor house once more?" she said, dropping a mock courtesy. "I thought you had deserted us."

"Not I," said I stoutly, holding out my hand. I saw there was a little play to be carried on for the benefit of Mrs. Knapp. For some reason she had not confided in her mother. "Not I, I am always your humble knight."

I saw that Mrs. Knapp was looking at us curiously, and pressed my advantage. Luella took my hand unwillingly. I was ready to dare a good deal for the clasp of her fingers, but I scarcely felt the thrill of their touch before she had snatched them away.

"There's nothing but pretty speeches to be had from you—and quotations at that," she said. There was malice under the seeming innocence of a pretended pout.

"There's nothing that could be so becoming in the circumstances."

"Except common sense," frowned Luella.

"The most uncommon of qualities, my dear," laughed Mrs. Knapp. "Sit down, children. I must see to Mr. Carter, who is lost by the portiere and will never be discovered unless I rescue him."

"Take him to dear Aunt Julia," said Luella as her mother left us.

"Dear Aunt Julia," I inferred, was Mrs. Bowser.

Luella took a seat and I followed her example. Then, with chin in hand and elbow on the arm of her chair, the young woman looked at me calmly and thoughtfully.

"Well," said Luella at last, in a cut-

ting voice, "why don't you talk?"

"It's your lead," said I gloomily.

"You took the last trick."

At this reference to our meeting, Luella looked surprised. Then she gave a little rippling laugh.

"Really," she said, "I believe I shall begin to like you, yet."

"That's very kind of you; but turn about is fair play."

"You mustn't do that," said she severely, "or I shan't."

"I meant it," said I defiantly.

"Then you ought to know better than to say it," she retorted.

"I'm in need of lessons, I fear."

"How delightful of you to confess it! Then shall I tell you what to do?"

This was very charming. I hastened to say:

"Do, by all means."

The young woman sank back in her chair, clasped her hands in her lap as her mother had done, and glanced hastily about. Then in a low voice she said:

"Be yourself."

It was an electric shock she gave me, not more by the words than by the tone.

I struggled for a moment before I regained my mental balance.

"Don't you think we could get on safer ground?" I suggested.

"No," said Luella. "There isn't any safe ground for us otherwise."

The sudden heart-sickness at the remainder of my mission with which these words overwhelmed me, tied my tongue and mastered my spirits. It was this girl's father that I was pursuing. Oh, why was this burden laid upon me? Why was I to be torn on the rack between inclination and duty?

Luella watched my face narrowly through the conflict in my mind, and I felt as though her spirit struggled with mine to win me to the course of open, honest dealing. But it was impossible. She must be the last of all to know.

Her eyes sank as though she knew which had won the victory, and a proud, scornful look took the place of the grave good humor that had been there a moment before. Then, on a sudden, she began to speak of the theaters, rides, drives and what-not of the pleasures of the day. Suddenly she stopped with a weary look.

"There's Aunt Julia waiting for you," she said with a gleam of malicious pleasure. "Come along. I deliver you over a prisoner of war."

"Wait a minute," I pleaded.

"No," she said, imperiously motioning me. "Come along." And with a sigh I was given, a helpless, but silently protesting, captive, to the mercies of Mrs. Bowser.

That eloquent lady received me with flutter of feathers, if I may borrow the expression, to indicate her pleasure.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### JUST AS GOOD AS MONEY.

##### Amos Budd's Little Contribution to the Church.

Stories have been told of buttons, tacks and various extraneous substances found in contribution boxes, but it is seldom that a church-member strikes a blow so severe as was that delivered by Amos Budd of Porterville on one occasion. It was at the close of a missionary sermon that Mr. Budd, whose wont was to contribute ten cents to each of the charities to the support of which the church subscribed, was seen to take take a blue slip from his pocket and look at it keenly and affectionately. When, after a slight but evident hesitation he dropped the slip, carefully folded, into the box, Deacon Lane, who was passing it, could hardly refrain from an exclamation of joy. "The Lord will bless you, Brother Budd," he said, when the sermon was over, hurrying down the aisle to overtake the prosperous grocer. "I hope so," returned Mr. Budd, dryly, "but I'm afraid you call on that being a check that I dropped in the box. It wa'n't. 'Twas a receipted bill for kerosene the church owed me last year, and it had been overlooked. Of course it's jest the same as money, though, when you come to that."—Youth's Companion.

#### Dogs' Homing Instinct.

The other day, writes a correspondent, a dog was sent by carriage to Brandon station, in Norfolk, en route for London, from Buckingham hall. At Ely it slipped its collar as the guard took it out to give it water, the time was after dark on a winter evening, and the dog dashed away and could not be found.

At 6:30 on the following morning one of the stablemen at Buckingham heard a dog whining and howling under the window. It was the same dog returned. The distance from Ely to Buckingham is computed at 17 miles.

The dog is a female spaniel, and it is virtually certain that its local knowledge of the country about Buckingham to a mile from the former. This would leave it an unknown tract of 16 miles to travel through the dark in a single night. By what sense was it guided?—Country Life.

# A SURGICAL OPERATION



If there is any one thing that a woman dreads more than another it is a surgical operation.

We can state without fear of a contradiction that there are hundreds, yes, thousands, of operations performed upon women in our hospitals which are entirely unnecessary and many have been avoided by

## LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND

For proof of this statement read the following letters.

Mrs. Barbara Base, of Kingman, Kansas, writes to Mrs. Pinkham:

"For eight years I suffered from the most severe form of female troubles and was told that an operation was my only hope of recovery. I wrote Mrs. Pinkham for advice, and took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and it has saved my life and made me a well woman."

Mrs. Arthur R. House, of Church Road, Moorestown, N. J., writes:

"I feel it is my duty to let people know what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me. I suffered from female troubles, and last March my physician decided that an operation was necessary. My husband objected, and urged me to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and to-day I am well and strong."

## FACTS FOR SICK WOMEN.

For thirty years Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made from roots and herbs, has been the standard remedy for female ills, and has positively cured thousands of women who have been troubled with displacements, inflammation, ulceration, fibroid tumors, irregularities, periodic pains, and backache.

Mrs. Pinkham invites all sick women to write her for advice. She has guided thousands to health. Address, Lynn, Mass.

#### Decollete.

"Did you see Mrs. Lucette at the hop last night?" asked Mrs. Gaddie.

"Yes," replied her husband.

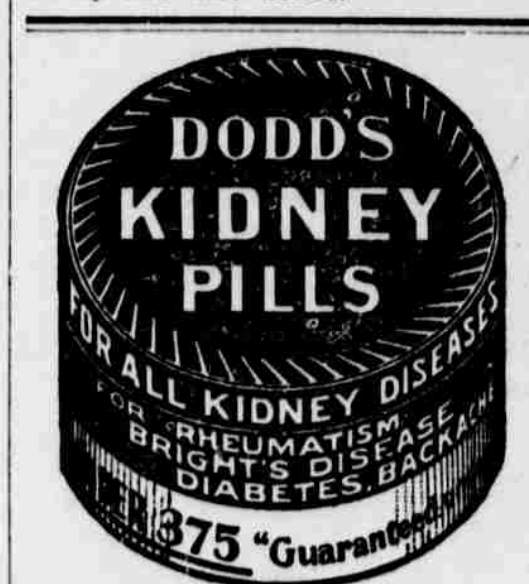
"This morning's paper says she was dressed entirely in black. Is that so?"

"Well—er—no. I wouldn't say that she was dressed entirely."—Philadelphia Press.

Girls are partial to automobiles because they have sparkers.

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When money begins to talk people sit up and take notice.



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