

The Black Menace

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

CHAPTER 1.

"You recall the sudden death of my uncle, Martin Dale, a fortnight ago?"

It was a very anxious and worried young lady who had come to Kennedy's laboratory and introduced herself as Clare Claremont.

Her clear gray eyes looked out searchingly beneath the rakish hat that tilted over a mass of the softest Titian-tinted hair. Altogether, Clare Claremont, from the nervously nodding tip of feather above her head to the dainty toe of her modish little boot, was a fascinating creature, trebly so in her appealing distress.

"I recall it perfectly," encouraged Kennedy. "Is there something I can do to help you?"

Craig shot a sideways glance at me. Indeed, we did remember the case, for we had discussed it several times.

Two weeks before, the highly respected president of the One Hundredth National bank had passed out of life most mysteriously and most dramatically, and we had wished that we might have an excuse for becoming connected with the case.

It had happened on the evening of a birthday party, which had been arranged for his niece and ward, Clare Claremont, to celebrate the arrival of her 18th birthday. The party was already assembling at the Dale mansion. A shot was heard up stairs, and, according to the newspaper reports, Clare herself, followed by a young man well known in society, Jack Speed, had rushed up. There they had found Dale in his room, lying on the floor, an ugly wound in his forehead and clutched in his hand a revolver.

There had been the usual attempt to hush the matter up—the conflicting stories of an intruder and of his "cleaning a gun," but it was generally understood that, although the coroner's jury brought a non-committal verdict, Dale had committed suicide.

A Nervous Girl.

Clare leaned nervously forward, watching Kennedy's face intently. "Professor Kennedy," she went on, in a very tremulous tone, "when my uncle's safe at the office was opened, it was found that my entire estate of over \$1,000,000 was dissipated. There was not a cent left—nor a cent of his own."

She leaned over even closer in her excitement, talking rapidly, though without hysterics.

"But I did find in some of his papers, which he overlooked or forgot to destroy with the rest of his books, a number of strange letters. Someone had blackmailed him. Every dollar was gone. I was penniless. I set out with a detective trying to make something out of the letters, for they seemed to point to a gang of blackmailers. I determined to get back what I could." She paused thoughtfully and added, "Somehow I believe that the money, or at least a large part of it, is somewhere, if I could only find it."

She laid down on the laboratory table a piece of paper on which was some writing, in a peculiar disguised scrawl. The paper was dirty and crumpled.

"Today, I received this," she explained.

I bent over with Kennedy and read:

You will call off your detective Ravenal as well as that young man, Speed—ore we will get you all.

The Black Menace.

Jack Speed, I happened to know, was at the time a newspaper man on the Star. His father, a broker, had become tired of Jack's wild and notorious society career and had told him that he would have to do some serious work. Speed had come down to the Star with the rather novel proposal that, owing to his close society connections, he could write a great deal of stuff that no one else could get.

The novelty of the thing had appealed to the Star and they had given him a job. To the amazement of everybody on the paper, Speed was actually making good. He had never done anything serious before, but now seemed to see his chance and take it. I was glad of it for he was a most likeable fellow and the experience was making a man of him.

A Young Detective.

More than that, it was easy to see from the way in which Clare

spoke of Jack Speed, that she thought a great deal of him, and I felt sure that if he came through on the Star it would be the best thing for both of them.

Ravenal we already knew as a young detective who had, like so many others, come to New York apparently from nowhere and by some process 'arrived.' I did not recall that he had had any very remarkable cases, and yet he seemed to have done pretty well. Some of the cases were given to him by people very well known. He did not call himself a detective, but simply an "investigator." It sounded better with his society clientele.

"What have you and Mr. Ravenal discovered, so far?" asked Kennedy.

"Very little. It seems as though every time we get a clue that leads anywhere, this gang must get ahead of us and spoil it. Now comes the note. I had heard of you and I thought that the best thing I could do would be to come and see you before—"

An envelope suddenly sealed in through the air from the window and dropped on the floor just beside us. Clare jumped up with a little scream. I picked up the envelope as Craig ran to the window. He looked up and down, but there was nobody there. Whoever had sealed the envelope in had had plenty of time to get around the side of the Chemistry building and disappear on the campus. Pursuit was useless now.

He turned and took the envelope from my hand. With his finger he tore it open and pulled out a note. As he did so, from the note there fluttered to the floor a crisp yellow piece of paper. I stopped to pick it up and as I did so gave a startled gasp. My fingers closed over a thousand dollar bill!

Kennedy looked in amazement, first at the note in his own hands and then at the bill in mine. Clare uttered a startled scream. It was evident that she had thought the letter was another threat from the Black Menace. Together we three crowded about and read the note. It was short and direct:

"Miss Clare Claremont: I know of four attempts to get the Black Menace—the great society blackmailer. I approve of your going to Kennedy finally. That is all I can say. I know who it is but my lips are sealed. If you knew you would understand. You must keep this secret even from your detective and Mr. Speed."

"Ripley Granby." The name at the end of the note was no less of a shock to us than the strange succession of events which had just led up to this mysterious communication. Ripley Granby was perhaps the best known clubman in town, a friend of Dale and of Clare's own father before his death, clubmate of Speed, and altogether a notable figure in New York society.

What the note could mean none of us was able even to dream. It was certainly not a forgery, nor was it likely that any one would lightly throw about thousand dollar bills unless there was some great and compelling reason for it.

Kennedy's mind was working rapidly, endeavoring to piece together some order out of the sudden chaos. Clare looked at him anxiously. Kennedy smiled.

"At Least One Friend." "Evidently you have one friend," he encouraged, "even if he insists on remaining unknown to every one except ourselves."

Clare's mind seemed to be in a whirl. A moment before she had been penniless. Now at least she had a sizable sum of money, and there seemed to be no reason why one who did things in this way would leave her in the lurch. I handed her the bill. She hesitated a moment to take it and I could fancy the thoughts that were passing through her mind. Finally, she turned to Craig.

"Evidently he has confidence in you," she said simply.

If there had been the slightest doubt before of Kennedy's interest in the case, there certainly was none now. There could be no question but that the death of Martin Dale and the looting of his estate involved matters of the utmost interest and importance.

"You may need all that money and much more," he remarked

slowly, "but you are quite right, Miss Claremont. We must follow this thing wherever it leads us to the end. Would you mind taking me with you so that I can have a talk with Mr. Ravenal and find out just how far he had gone? I should much prefer to work with him than to have him think that I have come in to crowd him out."

Greatly Delighted.

Clare was delighted at his acceptance. Though she said nothing about it, it was easy to see that the situation troubled her. One detective who had gone so far and could go no farther might be a serious stumbling block if another was called in. Kennedy's attitude promised to smooth over what she had considered to be a very rough spot.

(To Be Continued Next Week.)

SUGAR AND NATURAL LAW.

AFTER much shouting and waving of hands and arms for popular effect, politicians admit that they have lost their "desperate" battle to lower the prices of sugar to consumers. In giving up, they charge the sugar men, especially the market operators, with being "gamblers." They "regret" that the operators have not broken the law, so they cannot punish them. Government officials threaten publicity of all so-called manipulations, and propose "to let the sugar profiteers know the government knows what they are doing and how they are doing it." If anything is more asinine than this sort of rot for public consumption, it has not been discovered. It is a confession of bad faith to the public and of weakness to the sugar trade.

When all is said and done, this very simple fact remains, that if the demand for sugar keeps up prices will remain firm with a tendency to rise; if the demand decreases materially, or the supply increases, sugar prices will go down accordingly. The present indications point to a shortage compared to 1922. Herein lies the honest answer to prices. Pro bono publico politicians and government officials can very quickly reduce prices by producing more sugar. Whether this is done from the soil or from warehouses is immaterial. They also can get a lot of help from the "bear operators," or one class of the so-called "speculators," who would make money by a decline in prices. Up to the present the bears have done all they could to out-general the "bull operators" but without avail. Between these two forces the market is pretty well stabilized usually.

It is an interesting battle to watch, and the consumers quite naturally hope that the bears will win their fight. It is well to remember in all of this that politics and politicians have little or nothing to do with prices, except to constantly increase them through costly interference with business and endeavors to change natural laws. These cannot be altered even for President Harding, who might worry to better advantage over high prices of more essential commodities than sugar.

There was not much "interference" two years ago when market operators lost millions in sugar by over bidding. The law of supply and demand worked then. Why not now?

The Thirteen Points.

From the Syracuse Post-Standard. Mrs. Gay Gooderson, who is a republican assembly district leader in New York has been advising women what they must do to attain political leadership. She dares to list them, and to invite women to make inventory of their own qualifications whenever they feel disappointment because an interest in politics does not lead immediately to a commanding place in politics. To be a successful political leader then, says Mrs. Gooderson, a woman must possess:

- The wisdom of Solomon.
- The acumen of the queen of Sheba.
- The charm of Helen of Troy.
- The patience of Job.
- The courage of the American doughboy.
- The guile of a serpent.
- The untiring energy of the ant.
- The gentleness of the dove.
- The strength of an ox.
- The silence of the sphinx.
- The silver tongue of William Jennings Bryan.
- The humor of George Ade.
- The ability to rule without letting people know they are ruled.

The maniacs of "Wards" Island have tried six times within a few weeks to set their asylum on fire. "Poor, crazy things," says everybody, "can't they realize that they would be victims of the flames?" Yes, and what about the other maniacs, called statesmen, in Europe, that constantly set their places on fire with war? Can't they realize that they must be victims of the war?

The young girls of Vassar college are forbidden to go shopping on roller skates. They used to skate two miles to the store, then toddle around the shop on skates. "Undignified" the faculty says. "Very cunning," the average man will say.

An Italian peasant shoots a priest for refusing him absolution. Five Russian officers executed for spying. A high court decides that a city cannot sue a newspaper for libel, no matter what the newspaper says about the city. And finally, a witness testifies that a drugless healer combined much "petting and intimate affection" with healing processes. The "healer" replies with "God is Love" and what can you say to that?

The Princess Dehra

By JOHN REED SCOTT.

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At first even the imperturbable prime minister had been too astonished to act; now he came slowly forward, his old, lean face aglow with the joy of the combat and the music of the steel. Then he stopped and stood, watching, head slightly forward, lips half parted, eyes shining, fingers playing lovingly over his own hilt. Ah! it was a good fight to look upon; a noble fight, indeed; such masterly sword play he had never seen, nor was ever like to see again; the swift attacks, the fierce rallies, the marvellous agility, the steady eye, the steel wrist. And then, the nerve of him who was losing, and must know it; for Lotzen was losing—surely losing. Twice the archduke had driven him around the table; now he forced him slowly back . . . back . . . back . . . against it . . . tight against it.

"Yield, cousin!" he said; "it's your last chance."

But the duke only smiled mockingly and fought on.

With an appealing cry Madeline Spencer darted toward them.

"Spare him, Armand!" she pleaded, "spare him!"

The archduke stepped out of distance, but with point still advanced.

"Take him!" he said, "take him, and joy with him!"

Ferdinand of Lotzen slowly raised his sword in salute.

"My thanks, cousin!" he said, "I can accept from her what I could not from you. You have bested me—the game is over. I shall not be needed at the reading of the decree.—Your royal highness—messieurs of the council—I bid you farewell." He held out his hand to Madeline Spencer. "Come, my duchess, we will go to your Paris and the Rue Royale.—Monsieur le Comte, the door!"—and with all the stately grace and courteous deference of a minuet he led her down the room, and bowed her out, and himself after.

There was a moment of silence; then the archduke spoke.

"My lords, the book of laws is found, or so much of it as the fire has spared. How we

chanced to come upon it here will best be told another time; enough now that but for the daring and quick wit of her royal highness, it would have been forever lost." He glanced at the clock. "The hour for the council has already passed. Your excellency, the laws are before you, will you do us the favor to read the decree?"

The count stepped forward and lifted the book from the rug; of the heavy cover little remained but the brass hinges; the first few pages were scorched and half consumed, and all the edges charred and split and eaten into by the flames; but otherwise it seemed to be without hurt.

Yet Dehra's hand went to her heart, as slowly and carefully Epping turned the leaves, holding them together the while, lest they break apart. Was the decree there! Might Lotzen have destroyed it—torn it from the book, before they came upon him!

Then the count stopped, and bending down read for a moment. When he looked up there was a strange expression on his face; he did not speak at once; and when he did his voice was repressed and almost trembling.

"It is here," he said; "executed the day before King Frederick died. I read it:

"Section one hundred thirty-first.—It is hereby decreed that his royal highness the Archduke Armand shall be eligible to the crown of Valeria, and he is herewith restored to his proper place in the line of succession, as the right heir male of Hugo, second son of Henry the Third."

For an instant Armand's brain whirled—then he awoke to Dehra's hands in his, and her voice in his ear, and the shouts and waving blades of the ministers.

"The ritual, Epping! the ritual!" the princess cried, and caught up the sword she had tossed aside to rescue the book—then gazed in wondering fear, as the old count raised his hand and shook his head.

"Wait!" he said; "there is another decree that comes before the ritual. Attend!—"

"Section one hundred thirty-second.—Whereas, for the

first time in a thousand years the Dalberg has no son: It is hereby decreed that the succession as head of the house of Dalberg, and, ipso facto, to the crown of Valeria, together with all their hereditary titles, powers, possessions and privileges, shall be vested in our only child and daughter, Dehra, princess royal of Valeria. And all and every decree conflicting therewith is hereby specifically revoked and annulled."

And now the swords were up again, and the archduke's with them, and the wild huzza roared through the palace and far into the park; and Bernheim and Moore, coming down the corridor, dashed into the library and stopped, amazed; then joined in, knowing that it must mean victory.

But Dehra, herself, pale-faced, tear-eyed and trembling, turned and flung her arms around Armand's neck.

"It's wrong, dear! it's wrong!" she cried; "you are the king!—you are the Dalberg!"

"No, sweetheart, it is right!" he said, releasing her arms, and bowing over her hand until his lips touched it. "Praise God! it is right."

Then he stepped back and flashed his sword above her head; and all the others sprang to meet it, and locked there, a canopy of steel.

"Valeria hails the head of the house of Dalberg as the queen!" he cried.

And from every throat came back the answer:

"We hail the Dalberg queen!"

And now the trembling had passed; she looked up at the swords proudly, and stretching out her hand she touched them one by one; and touching Armand's last—and her eyes sought his, and over her face broke the adorable smile, and she drew down his blade, and kissed it.

"Hail, also, to the king!" she said; "your king and mine, my lords!—the king that is to be."

(THE END.)

A Slight Mistake.
From the Boston Globe.

A Manchester firm was doing some work at a local hospital, and sent up one of its men. Later in the day the head of the firm phoned the hospital. A nurse answered.

"How's J— getting along?" he asked. The nurse replied, "He is resting comfortably," thinking the voice inquired after a patient by the same name. "Send him to the phone," roared the head of the firm. "I didn't send him up there to rest, but to work."

Why?

From the American Legion Weekly. A citizen who maintained a pawnshop took out a fire insurance policy. The same day a blaze broke out that destroyed the building and its contents. The insurance company tried in vain to find sufficient grounds to refuse payment, and was obliged to content itself with the following letter appended to the check:

"Dear Sir: We note that your policy was issued at 10 o'clock on Thursday morning and that the fire did not occur until 2:30. Why this unseasonable delay?"

De Valera will soon be caught. He is hiding in a cave. Free State soldiers are trying to get him out with smoke bombs. Barring a new Irish party, the Free State will soon have peace, and only Ulster to worry about.

"Tell me what you read and I'll tell you what you are." Nothing much in that saying. Darwin read fairy stories in the evening to rest his mind from the study of earth worms, or the problem "how did the eye first start?" Fairy stories did not tell what he was.

You cannot judge a man by the fact that 99 per cent. of them will read with interest news appearing under headings such as these: "Jack Johnson, the negro fighter, is asked to fight in Havana, and fined \$2 for speeding."

Two Pennsylvania railroad trains at Williamsport, Pa. were held up recently in an effort to save the life of a child, who swallowed a coin. The youngster was rushed to a hospital in Philadelphia.

FATHER TO SON.

N. G. Taylor to his son Robert, when the latter was elected governor of Tennessee. Learn all your duties, and then promptly and fearlessly discharge them. In every transaction be governed: First, by the requirements of the law; second, by the demands of an enlightened conscience; third, by the supreme divine code. Let no temptation induce you to ignore the requirements of your self-respect. Let your promises be few and strictly performed. Do not forget that the eyes and ears of enemies are open to all you say or do; therefore, think much and let your words be well chosen. In all questionable cases, say and do those things that are clearly right and never doubtful. Place your hands in the hands of your Lord and ask His guidance in every condition of life.

Why That Bad Back?

Does spring find you miserable with an aching back? Do you feel lame, stiff, tired, nervous and depressed? Likely your kidneys have weakened. Winter is hard on the kidneys. Colds and chills and a heavier diet with less exercise tax them heavily. It's little wonder spring finds you with backache, rheumatic pains, headaches, dizziness and bladder irregularities. But don't be discouraged. Use Doan's Kidney Pills. Doan's have helped thousands and should help you. Ask your neighbor!

A South Dakota Case

Mrs. T. T. Robinson, Tyndall, S. D., says: "My kidneys were a source of constant distress. My back was weak and my kidneys didn't act regularly. I also suffered considerably from headaches and attacks of dizziness. Doan's Kidney Pills gave me almost instant relief and I am now quite well. I am deeply grateful to Doan's Kidney Pills."

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She Is, Is He?

It was while the World war was raging in Europe that a woman from the rural districts of a southern Kentucky county, visiting some new acquaintances in town, made the following remark:

"Yes, my niece is 'over there,' right in the thick of all that fighting!" "Is your niece a Red Cross nurse?" asked the young woman hostess very much interested.

"No, he's a soldier." But Did He Buy Several? Bill—Did Dan kill the fattest calf when his prodigal son came home? Sam—He was goin' to, but the boy wouldn't let him; he took the animal to the state fair and won a hat full of ribbons, and sold him for enough to buy several fattest calves.—Farm Life.

In the Candy Shop.

Backward Lover—"Do you like gumdrops?" She—"I think kisses much sweeter."

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