

# The Black Menace

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

"Pink!"

There was a shattering of glass and all was now in darkness. Our flashlight had been smashed.

"Thanks" muttered Kennedy jamming on the brakes just where he stood, and leaping out of the car tugging at the tool box back of us, where he had placed his precious packages.

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"Listen!" cautioned Speed, shutting off the engine.

We did listen, in the silence of the night we could hear the millions of insects with their steady drone. But above that there was something else. Faintly now there floated down what sounded like a far-off cry for help.

We gazed at each other in amazement. Could it be that we had stumbled on what we sought? Was it Claire? If not, why the shot at us. Another whizzed down, striking the hood over the engine and glancing off at the rocks. We must have been a fine target and I quickly shut off all the lights.

Kennedy and Jack by this time were peering about us in the darkness. From the side of the road there led a tortuous rocky path, up the cliff side.

"Shall we chance it?" cried Speed, by this time thoroughly alive to the possibilities of our quest.

**A TICKLISH BUSINESS**  
Kennedy did not wait to answer. Already he had seized the peculiar case which he had carried so carefully from the toolbox and began opening it as we started scrambling up the narrow trail in the rocks.

It was a ticklish business, but we forged ahead, breathless. Once I fancied I saw a light moving far above us along the cliffs, but only for a moment, and then it was gone.

Shipping and drawing as best we could we climbed, Kennedy still working at the cover of the thing which he carried.

Far above us, some hundreds of feet, a revolver flashed in the blackness and a bullet clipped a branch of a tree over our heads. In the momentary flash, I could just make out a figure disappearing behind a rocky ledge for shelter.

"Fire back," directed Kennedy. "There's no use for us to take all the risk. Someone seems to have located us. Use every bit of shelter you can."

"Split! Split! Split!"  
The fusillade grew hot as Speed and I answered. There was no way of telling whether our assailant was alone or in force. Neither of us could see what we were aiming at other than the location of the various flashes of light as the guns were discharged, punctuating the blackness with dashes of light and waking the solemn echoes of the hills reverberating like a battle.

There was something weird about it all. And there was something extremely dangerous too. Besides what would happen when we closed in?

Suddenly we heard a cry above us—shrill and piercing.

"Help!"

Was it Claire? Speed muttered under his breath that he recognized her voice, and I believe that his acute ear was right. If it was, would we be able to save her? How were we to surmount that rocky eyrie?

**KENNEDY PAUSES**  
In the shelter of the ledge now Kennedy paused, as we crowded with him, protecting ourselves as much as possible. From the case which he had now opened he had by this time pulled what looked like a peculiar gun. As he worked it, he jammed into the breach a huge cartridge, not like anything I had ever seen before.

We watched breathlessly as he aimed the gun upward and fired.

## CHAPTER 13

### The Infernal Machine

Our return to the city with Clara was without incident except for the thrilling recital she gave of how she had been carried off.

In spite of her nervousness, she was able to relate quite connectedly what had happened the fateful night, though it did not seem to help us much. Always it was only emissaries of the Black Menace, like Werner or Thorne, that we succeeded in getting up with.

It seemed that after receiving the falsified message from Minna Oakleigh, she had worried greatly until the arrival of a man who convinced her that he had been sent by Mrs. Oakleigh. Almost frantic at the mere suggestion that Speed might have fallen under the domination of the fascinating Russian dancer, Clara had finally started out in a taxicab to go to the Mansion of Mystery herself.

He had not got out of the city. At first she noticed that the driver, instead of following the shortest route to the bridge to Long Island, was on a side street leading to the tough district of the city, where the gas houses were. She had rapped on the window and remonstrated, but it had no effect. Finally she became more insistent.

The driver stopped his car and climbed down. Clara in a moment was out of the car and grasping her little revolver.

But at that very minute there pulled up from around a corner a big black limousine and from it leaped out the very man who had called on her to convince her that Mrs. Oakleigh's message was genuine. It was Thorne.

Clara had faced them both with her gun and as they advanced she snapped the trigger. There was an explosion but neither stopped. Again she fired, but still no effect. She knew that she could not have missed them, but something must be wrong with the gun. But it was too late. They were upon her, and stifling her screams, they threw her into the closed car which whirled off rapidly.

What happened after that was not clear, and we could only account for it on the theory that some stupefying drug must have been given to her when she was flung into the closed car.

Dimly she recollected having been carried in the car for hours, at the end of which she seemed to be recovering her consciousness and memory. It was too late. She was not only bound and gagged, but the country through which she was passing was strange, wild and uninhabited.

The next thing she remembered was when the car stopped at the top of what seemed to be a high bluff. She was taken out and ordered gruffly to climb down the side of the hill by a rough trail, while the car whisked away.

Some feet down the hill she had come to a deserted cabin on the hillside. Into this the abductor had led her and she was forced into a room, a prisoner.

There was no way to communicate with the outside world, and downstairs in the house she could hear voices, as though Thorne had with him others. Once she fancied she heard a woman's voice in an argument. I wondered whether it might not have been Breshkaya, prompted by jealousy of Thorne and fearful that he might fall under the spell of Clara.

**FREED AT LAST**

At any rate, nothing happened until late the following night, when suddenly she heard revolver shots fired below. Somehow she fancied that help was coming. Her active mind contrived a means of escape. In spite of the fact that she was bound, she managed to tip over a piece of the scant furniture in such a way that the window was smashed. By rubbing the ropes that bound her wrists on the jagged ends of glass she managed to free her hands. Removing the gag and untying her ankles was a quick operation. She was free.

The breaking of the glass had passed unsuspected in the fusillade of our shots. But when she managed to gain the outside by dropping down a story and a half from the window, her captor saw her. With a shout, he started after her. She ran wildly, and as she did so, she missed her footing and fell many feet below, fortunately catching her dress in some scrub bushes. She was saved from the fall hundreds of feet below, but clinging as she was to the very edge of the perilous ledge, she could see the

hered face of Thorne peering over and coming at her.

The rest of the story we know ourselves.

Late though it was when we arrived again back in the city and left Clara at her apartment, we were greeted at our own apartment by the sleepy hall boy with a startling piece of news. It was nothing less than a message to Speed which had been sent over by his valet.

Minnie Oakleigh had been found poisoned at an obscure New York hotel.

We hurried over and found the place. Already her husband was there and, as he grasped the hand of Speed, one could feel what a shock the sudden disclosure had been to him, tactlessly made as it had been by the police who found the body.

We mounted to the little room where the discovery had been made. There had not yet been time to remove the body which was lying, still fully clothed on the bed.

**MRS. JAMES IDENTIFIED**

A glance was all that was needed to confirm the suspicions which I already had entertained. Minna Oakleigh was the beautiful "Mrs. James".

She had left a note to her husband, but it was torn in half. The later half, which had contained some kind of a confession, was still missing. Still there was enough so that we could reconstruct her story, though I was convinced that the missing half of the note was the important part that perhaps led to the Black Menace.

It was most fearsome as we looked around the scantily furnished room. The power of this blackmailer seemed to be unlimited. Death followed every attempt to reveal his identity, and he must have had in his employ innumerable faithful henchmen to cover up his trail. Still, that was not so difficult to understand when one considered the vast sums of money that he had been able for a long time to extort from society.

In her grip was a packet of letters. Many had been abstracted, but there was enough to reveal that Minna Oakleigh was deep in debt and other entanglements that she dared not reveal. It was the explanation of her interest in Kennedy that night at the Mystery Mansion. She had been trying at last, secretly to get Kennedy and Clara in her fight.

Speed gazed in silent sympathy at his friend, Oakleigh.

In one of the letters there had been mention of the name of Breshkaya. As he read it, Oakleigh clenched his fists.

"That woman," he ground out. "If I had known that Minna knew her I might have prevented this."

Sympathetically Speed drew out of his story. Quite apparently as we pieced it together, there had been an attempt to entangle him in the web of the Black Menace.

"That explains everything," he groaned. "One night while Minna was away, I dropped into the Crystal Palace with some friends. One of them introduced this Breshkaya, a dancer up there. I thought she was a bit too interested in me, at the time. But I didn't suspect anything like this. In fact, the party was getting too gay for me when I excused myself. Breshkaya seemed almost angry at my going, but instead of keeping me, rather disgusted me. Still I didn't think anything of it, at the time."

**AGAIN STRUCK DOWN**

As I listened, it was no more than I expected. Again someone who had been coming to the aid of Clara had been struck down. And at the same time one who had stood up against the Black Menace had been delivered a terrible blow.

Mrs. Oakleigh was one of the most popular of the young society matrons. In her death she was a pathetic figure. But our sympathy was for her husband. The scandal was indeed a sad heritage to leave behind. He was frantic, yet there seemed to him no way to turn to avenge her ruin.

As we parted, more than ever now it was imperative to watch Breshkaya. Kennedy tried to outline some way of doing it, but indeed it was no light task, for she was popular and had a host of friends.

Therefore, the following day I spent down at the Star and about town in an endeavor to pick up such information about Breshkaya and particularly about Minna Oakleigh as might prove of value.

If I fancied that Breshkaya would go into hiding after what

had happened, I found that I was grossly mistaken.

I was able to find out very little about either Minna Oakleigh or Breshkaya. The newspapers were of course, full of the tragedy, but when one dug under the vast amount of sob stuff that was printed, one found very little information.

As for Breshkaya, reports that I was able to get of her during the day from those whom I knew in the "White Light" section of Broadway seemed to indicate that the death of Thorne had been a hard blow to her. Somehow her dancing partner exercised a power over her that no other man seemed yet to have awakened.

More that that, as nearly as I could make out, Breshkaya seemed to be a changed woman. It was not merely fancy. There was now a hardness and heartlessness in her that had been lacking before.

**A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE**

Many noticed the sudden difference. No longer was she merely the gay butterfly, thoughtless, pleasure loving. Actually now her every action seemed to be coldly calculating. As I pieced together what I learned from her intimates, I could do no better than compare her to a modern Gorgon. It seemed as if she was determined that every man who looked on her should be turned to stone, as it were, and perish.

The more that I thought of the change, the more I saw that our search for the Black Menace must revolve around this dancer, and the more difficult it was going to be. What the hold was that the Black Menace might have on her at once became the most absorbing of problems for us.

It was after dinner that night that I finished my collection of details and decided upon returning to report to Kennedy.

He was not at our apartment when I returned but on the table I found a hastily scrawled note: "Call from Speed to meet him at laboratory. You'll find me there."  
**CRAIG**

(To be continued next week.)

**When She Marries.**  
H. L. Mencken.  
Not one woman in a hundred marries her first choice. Her first choice, perhaps, is not a living

**CHURCHES IN SUMMER.**

**T**HOSE who claim to believe that the power and influence of churches is growing less will find trouble in accounting for the church program for Sioux City during the coming summer. Announcement that services will be continued throughout the hot months in all but one of the churches of the city would have seemed a bit unusual not so long ago. Today it is quite the rule, not only in Sioux City but in cities and towns generally throughout the entire country.

A significant change has come about in recent years both in the attitude of many church organizations and in results achieved. The summer months, instead of being looked upon as a dead season for the churches, have come to be regarded as a time for some of their most fruitful work. Not only do the churches keep busy at home but they have provided for giving opportunity to hear their most able preachers in the summer resorts and other points reached by vacationists during this period. Summer institutes and conferences have increased in number and their influence, especially with young people, is tremendous. A great majority of the recruiting for missionary, social service and ministerial work is accomplished in these gatherings.

Realization by the churches that religion is not a thing apart from, but a thing very closely identified with the every-day life of the community, has brought about this change, or at least has been a big factor in doing so. When the church is the center not only of the religious but of the social, athletic and perhaps educational work as well (many churches are maintaining vacation schools of various sorts) it is not hard to keep up interest in them. It would, on the other hand, be extremely hard to get consent to close them down.

Nothing has been lost by the churches throughout this evolution. But the gain has been tremendous. Realization that religion means right living, improvements of living conditions, and that it is a job to be thought about and worked at seven days in the week means broadening the viewpoint of the church's mission until it will be hard for anyone to deny that its wellbeing is essential to himself individually. Which is the attitude the church must create and maintain if it is to fulfill its mission of Christianizing the world.

In perfecting a machine for testing the psychology of color, a University of Pennsylvania professor has solved a problem which defied the chemists for many years.

## Opportunity Calls from CANADA



Visit Canada this summer—see for yourself the opportunities which Canada offers to both labor and capital—rich, fertile, virgin prairie land, near rail ways and towns, at \$15 to \$20 an acre—long terms if desired. Wheat crops last year the biggest in history; dairying and hogs pay well; mixed farming rapidly increasing.

**Excursion on 1st and 3d Tuesday of Each Month**

From various U.S. points, single fare plus \$2 for the round trip. Other special rates any day. Make this your summer outing—Canada welcomes tourists—no passports required—have a great trip and see with your own eyes the opportunities that await you.  
For full information, with free booklets and maps, write  
G. A. Cook, Desk W, Water-tower Bldg., 300 Foley's Trust Bldg., Omaha, Neb.; R. A. Garrett, Desk W, 111 W. Jackson St., St. Paul, Minn.  
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## Do Your Feet Hurt?

When shoes pinch or corns and bunions ache, get a package of **Allen's Foot-Ease**, the antiseptic, healing powder to be shaken into the shoes. It takes the sting out of corns, bunions and callouses, and gives instant relief to Smarting, Aching, Swollen feet. At night when your feet ache and burn from walking or dancing sprinkle some **Allen's Foot-Ease** in the foot-bath and your feet solve your foot troubles. Over 1,500,000 pounds of powder for the feet were used by our Army and Navy during the war. Sold everywhere.

## FRECKLES

**Don't Hide Them With a Veil; Remove Them With Othine—Double Strength**

This preparation for the treatment of freckles is usually so successful in removing freckles and giving a clear, beautiful complexion that it is sold under guarantee to refund the money if it fails.

Don't hide your freckles under a veil; get an ounce of Othine and remove them. Even the first few applications should show a wonderful improvement, some of the lighter freckles vanishing entirely.

Be sure to ask the druggist for the double-strength Othine; it is this that is sold on the money-back guarantee.

## LONG A PRIVILEGED CLASS

Prerogatives of Spanish Grandees Placed Them Almost on an Equality With Royalty.

The name Spanish grandees is given to the higher nobility of Spain—dating from the Thirteenth century—who at one time enjoyed almost royal privileges. They held their honors by inheritance, were exempt from taxation, and could leave the kingdom, and even enter the service of a foreign prince at war with Spain, without incurring the penalties of treason. In addition they had the right to remain covered in the presence of the sovereign and could not be summoned before any civil or criminal tribunal without a special warrant from the king. In national assemblies the grandees took precedence of the titled nobility. Ferdinand and Isabella greatly curtailed these peculiar privileges, and Charles V limited their number of families to 16 and reduced them to a dependent condition. Their dignities and prerogatives were totally abolished by Joseph Bonaparte, but these were partly restored by Ferdinand VII on his accession to the throne.

## Reclaimed Italian Marshes.

Seven tons of rice per hectare is the record average yield from what was until a short time ago worthless, unhealthful marsh lands just south of Rome. Wheat, barley, beets, alfalfa, tomatoes and flax are grown on land reclaimed by filling and drainage, and the former marsh lands support a tomato cannery, where 120 tons of tomatoes are concentrated every day. American Consul Leon Dominian, Rome, informs the Department of Commerce. Over six thousand acres of land have already been brought into usefulness.

**Restless Nights?**  
**When Coffee disagrees**  
**Drink Postum**  
**"There's a Reason"**