

The Black Menace

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

I was not surprised, for I had hardly thought to find him in. Leisurely I pursued my way over to the laboratory, which at that hour of the night was rather deserted.

As I approached, I was surprised not to see any light in it and I quickened my pace. What more surprised and even alarmed me was that the front door of the darkened building was wide open as I entered. My foot crunched on something brittle. I stooped and in the light from a street lamp far up the avenue I saw something gleaming. It was shattered glass. I looked again at the door. The glass in it was broken completely out. As my eyes became accustomed to the blackness I saw that all around were splinters of glass, as though many windows had been shattered.

I was by this time in a high state of nerves. What could have happened? Cautiously, I pushed my way into the hall and stood for a moment listening.

Chapter 13

LIKE A GROAN

Down the corridor came a faint sound, almost like a groan.

I groped forward. As I came upon the laboratory door I saw that it was a complete wreck. Inside in the dimness, I could see the tables and chairs thrown about in confusion, wood splintered, glassware broken.

My foot stumbled on something soft on the floor, and I bent down and touched it. It moved. I struck a match.

It was Kennedy, barely conscious, groaning and moving fitfully, in the flickering light of the match. On his head was a deep gash. His clothes were torn. What other injury he had sustained I could not tell. I tried to switch on the light, that something was wrong with the electricity.

Instantly there flashed through my mind what must have happened. Somehow the message from Speed must have been used to decoy him over to his own laboratory where a bomb had been planted. As he pushed open the door it had exploded. Only his natural caution had saved him from being too close and blown into bits.

I looked about hastily. What to do? If I left him, perhaps the attack might be renewed. Calling for help would do no good now. There was no one on this end of the campus likely to hear.

I bent over him. Vaguely he seemed to recognize me.

"Walter," he groaned.

I stooped down and picked him up staggering under his weight. I felt that I must get him away. Out through the broken glass entrance I managed to carry him, straining to hold him so that the jagged bits of glass on the ground would not cut him.

The air seemed to do him good, for he was overcome quite as much by the noxious fumes of the chemical infernal machine as by the shock.

It was not long now before I managed to get a car and soon I had him back in the apartment. In bed under medical care.

A devilish attack had been planned on Kennedy and he had received it. The doctor insisted that rest was imperative. Fret though Kennedy did, it made no difference. For a time at least the Black Menace would be able to operate unhampered.

Chapter 14

The Pool of Flame

Having made Kennedy comfortable and assured that it was merely a question of keeping him quiet for a time, I returned to the laboratory and with the aid of a carpenter whom I managed to get out of bed under the promise of a substantial bonus, I had windows and doors boarded up for the night.

Kennedy passed a restless night and was glad enough to be quiet the following day. To reassure him, however, I spent the day at the laboratory, restoring it to its original condition as nearly as my unscientific hands could do so.

As I worked here and there I came upon evidence that before the explosion had taken place the laboratory itself had been ransacked. There did not seem to be anything missing, though there was much that had been smashed by the explosion. But

then I considered there had been nothing that could have interested the Black Menace except the hampering of Kennedy in his work, and if possible removing him from the case once and for all.

It was a hard job to get the place in order again, but with the aid of Kennedy's students we were making pretty fair progress and I felt sure that in a few days everything would be as shipshape as ever.

I was deeply engaged in the work when Speed called, very much excited.

"I know that Kennedy must be kept quiet," he began, as he looked about with interest on what I was doing, "yet I feel that we must not let up on this fellow for an instant."

SPEED IS CORDIAL

Speed was very cordial, but I could see that it was really Kennedy he wanted to see.

"I've been thinking about that decoy letter that was sent to me the other day," he finally remarked.

"Why should anyone have wanted to get me out there at Trocadero Inn? I've been making inquiries and I find there is something about that place that bears investigation. I've almost a mind to go out and look it over."

I shook my head. "I afraid it will be a dangerous thing for you, Jack," I cautioned. "Really I should advise you and Clare against making any avert move as long as Kennedy is laid up."

"Ravenal thinks there may be something to it," urged Speed, still unconvinced by my presentation.

"You know how things are," I urged. "It seems to me that we might better let well enough alone. Every time Kennedy has been away something has happened to either you or Clare."

"I don't know what to do," I figured Speed. It is too good a chance to let slip past. Who knows but that just because Kennedy is laid up the Black Menace may have become a little careless. Besides the letter would hardly have been sent to me unless the Black Menace had some reason to depend on this place. I'd like to look it over."

The more I argued against it, the more I could see that it merely confirmed Speed in his desire to investigate. He finally left, and instinctively I knew that he would follow out that clue. I could not but fret over the danger. Tell Kennedy I would not, for if he thought as I did I knew very well that he was likely to get out of bed, orders or no orders from the doctor, and forestall or prevent Speed.

I was in a quandary, and finally determined that the best thing I could do was to go ahead on my own line, trusting that chance would favor Speed.

THE EXPECTED HAPPENS

And, indeed, the result was just as I expected, if not quite the way I anticipated, although with such a criminal, or band of criminals as the Black Menace I do not know that one might say that anything might be expected except that which more diabolical than imagination.

It was in the forenoon that Speed had dropped in on me. Once or twice I called up to find him during the day but was able to get no answer. After the second time, when I called up and was unable to locate Speed, I began to get anxious and called up Clare. To my greater anxiety she did not answer, and it was then that I knew that she had gone with him on some quest.

Not until late in the evening did I get any word. And then it was that a car pulled up short at the laboratory. To my great relief, I saw both Clare and Jack in the doorway. But they were disheveled and looked as though they might have been through a wreck. Their clothes hung on them wrinkled, and there were several bad burns on their flesh.

"For heaven's sake," I asked. "What's the matter? Where have you been?"

Speed forced a smile. "You were right," he answered. "We should not have done it. Yet the temptation was too great. We went out to the Trocadero."

"Yes,—and what happened?" "Clare insisted on going," he

replied. "And it was a correct clue, alright."

I listened in amazement as Speed, with a word now and then from Clare, poured out the remarkable story of how he had gone to the fast road house and had almost succeeded in getting the goods on the criminal whom we were pursuing.

ALL RIGHT AT FIRST

It seemed that Minna Oakleigh had been in reality pretty well known there and starting upon that assumption, which proved to be correct, Speed had played his game cleverly, not disclosing who he really was but posing as one of those who had become involved in the game that was being played at the Mystery Mansion.

Everything had gone along famously, and late in the afternoon, he gathered by hints that someone, perhaps the Black Menace himself, was expected to meet Madam Rene and Monsieur Jacques at the Trocadero.

The moment had arrived when the meeting was to take place and Speed and Clare were waiting for the arrival of a fast car which was to betray to them the identity of the blackmailer, when suddenly something must have gone wrong.

The car was approaching then, perhaps by some secret signal, its occupant must have been warned. Instead of turning in off the road to the Trocadero, he swept on past, never pausing. Speed and Clare had not expected that, but it was only a moment when they were out in Jack's racer and away.

The other car was no mean machine for speed and it was with great difficulty that they hung on to it, as it veered off the road and started up toward the Sound shore of the Island, in the direction of North Harbor.

It was an exciting chase, but Speed took the risk, for the prize was a great one.

Besides, he knew that it could not last forever. When North Harbor was reached, the other car must turn either back to the city or go out further on the island, and, in either case, he reasoned he had a good chance of catching it.

NOT WELL PLANNED

There was one thing, however, on which he had not figured. They had reached North Harbor, tearing through the town much to the scandal of the inhabitants. On went the other car until it came to a dock. There the occupant of the car had abandoned it, running out on the end of the dock and leaping into a motorboat with a hunting cabin, which was tied up there, evidently waiting for him.

He was away, leaving them for the moment helpless.

It was the work of only a few minutes, however, for Speed to find another fast boat in the neighborhood of the yacht club. In it he and Clare took up the chase again.

By this time the Black Menace if indeed, it was the Black Menace, on whose trail they were, had perhaps a mile started on them. But their commandeered boat proved to be the faster of the two; and it was not long before it was evident that they were overhauling them.

As their boat gained, Speed seized a megaphone and called for the other boat ahead to stop. But it was without effect. He drew his gun and fired. Back from the pursued boat came an answering shot.

For some minutes there was considerable gun play. Clare and Jack dropping down out of sight so that they would not be quite such good targets.

Suddenly Clare exclaimed in consternation. It was evident that it was not so much to hit them that the pursued boat-man was firing as for another purpose. The gas tank on their boat had been punctured by a shot and the gasoline was pouring out in a stream, spreading over the water in an iridescent scum.

Another shot and another stream poured forth, as the Black Menace realized that he had correctly located the tank. Still their boat gained, although it was now a question of how long it would maintain its headway, as the gas sank lower in the tank.

FAR IN THE LEAD

Desperately, the Black Menace pulled two cans of reserve gas from a locker in his boat. He opened them and began pouring them out over the water astern. The gas spread over the water as he sped on.

Gradually the headway of Speed's boat decreased as the gas in the pipe line failed and

none reached the carburetor. The engine stopped. No gas was reaching it.

The Black Menace was by this time far ahead and out-tanking them. He turned and from the locker pulled what looked like a Costan signal flare. He tore off the top. It flared, and he shot it out in a long curve of smoke and flame.

The rocket fell close to Speed's boat on the water as it hung idly. Instantly, the gasoline that lay heavy all about, surrounding them as they drifted, was ignited. They were in the midst of what was literally a pool of flame.

Around them licked the flames, setting their boat on fire. The heat was intense, scorching the paint and varnish. The inside of the boat was now on fire. It was only a matter of seconds now that they could stand it.

Far off the Black Menace was but a speck on the water. A boat was coming toward them with help but it was half a mile or so away, and it was slow. Something had to be done and immediately, or they would be burnt to cinders with help in sight.

Speed seized one of the leather cushions which was not yet afire and flung it overboard. It fell, parting the flame and throwing the burning gas to one side for a moment, only to have it, close together again on the surface of the water ominously. Yet it was enough to suggest something to Speed.

"There's just one chance," he muttered. "Will you follow me?"

She did not cling to him. That was not Clare's manner.

"Yes," she answered, her quick mind already divining what was in his thoughts.

QUICK ORDERS

He leaped to the side of the burning boat, above the scorching and smoking pool of flame about them. As he did so, he seized another cushion, motioning to her to do the same.

"Let go of it the moment you strike the water," he shouted. "Then down—down—with me."

He leaped over, the cushion before him like a shield to part the flames. As he touched the flaming water, thrashing about with the cushion, he cleared just a small space in the flaming pool about himself.

Clare was ready. Before the flames on the water could close again she leaped into the space he had cleared.

As she struck the water, he seized her. Together they sank, diving down on the angle as far as they could, swimming under water—the blazing oil above them.

To come up for air meant horrible destruction, for they could not dive back again fast enough.

Once Clare's breath gave out and she began to rise.

Speed seized her and with his last remaining strength managed to carry both until they bobbed up, a matter of inches beyond the circle of blistering fire.

Chapter 15

The False Clue

I cannot say that the experience Speed had had in his pursuit of the Black Menace had cooled his ardor in the least, although it did one thing. He was determined now that in any future attempt he would be sure to go alone and thus save Clare the danger of any attack.

Having seen that Clare was safely returned to her apartment where a new and trustworthy maid had been placed in charge, Speed lost no time in returning to me at the laboratory.

Again he began recounting his experience and his theories, and it was in the midst of it that Ravenal dropped in.

"My dear fellow," remonstrated Ravenal as he heard the story, "don't you see that what you are doing is nothing short of foolhardy? What is the use of retaining Kennedy, to say nothing of yourself, if you are going to deliberately expose yourself to danger, as well as Miss Claremont?"

I had had in mind the same caution to deliver, but was glad that it came from Ravenal, for I felt that it came from him with much better grace than from myself. It had little effect on Speed, however. He seemed, if anything, more determined than ever.

VERY LITTLE EFFECT

"And another thing," Speed insisted, brushing aside every argument, "I mean to get at the

bottom of the connection Breshkaya has with this affair."

"That, too, is another matter on which I wish to see you," said in Ravenal. "I've been doing a little shadow job on that lady myself ever since she led us that chase up in the Highlands. As far as I can find out, Breshkaya, since the death of Thorze, with whom she was really in love, seems to be a charged person, a very dangerous woman. And, besides, she is very bitter against both you and Miss Claremont. Watch out for her."

I could see that the argument had very little effect on Speed. When it came to matching wits he felt himself the equal of anyone.

"I'm going to renew my acquaintance with her just the same," he persisted. "Some way I'm going to trap her into telling me something. I'm convinced she knows more than we imagine."

As he spoke, I was really afraid for Speed. Nor did Ravenal make any concealment of his own concern.

"I guess I've watched Breshkaya as closely as you," retorted Speed to Ravenal finally. "At least, I think this time I shall be able to cope with her. I know her kind."

Ravenal shook his head. It was plain that he was loathe to allow the young newspaper man to make the attempt. And, as I thought of it, I myself could see no reason why Speed should be able to take care of himself any better than others who had been ensnared by the siren.

Still, both Speed and Clare had that unfortunate penchant of youth for rushing in where even Kennedy, with his experience, would fear to tread. I shrugged. If he would not listen to Ravenal his own man he would scarcely listen to me.

(Continued Next Week)

LET UNCLE SAM TELL 'EM.

Premier Mussolini of Italy believes the United States is the proper outlet for surplus labor in his country. Because it has been proved to him that America will not welcome whoever Italy may wish to unload he has been making some effort to sort out undesirables before they embark for this country. His proposal therefore to hold an international conference on immigration and emigration at Rome early next year seems entirely in order.

Rome dispatches state that the United States and all interested countries of Europe have agreed to be represented at this conference. It seems doubtful whether any definite program can be adopted in advance. European countries will have some differences of their own to thresh out, in all probability, but the big point on discussion is sure to be how many and what sort of immigrants the United States will receive.

It is to be hoped the American delegation, providing the "bitter enders" can be persuaded to ignore entangling alliances and let it go, will be prepared to give the European delegations definite answers to all the questions they can think of to ask.

No opportunity which promises so much in finding ways to reduce the troubles of Ellis Island has heretofore been presented. If the European nations can be told definitely just what sort of emigrants they need not expect to unload on the United States there will be little excuse for many of that sort reaching American ports of entry. Mussolini deserves to get the information he wants. He is seeking it in the right way.

The Cheerful Cherub

Why do I worry so much And think till I'm weak in my mind? No problem's too deep to be solved By just being honest and kind.

Fine Ancient Earings. From the New York World. Within the last decade has occurred the return of the earring so long laid aside. Few seen to-day, however, surpass in taste and delicate finish the earrings of Biote, the daughter of Aristotle, which were found in Chalicia where the young woman was buried. These ornaments represented doves swinging in golden hoops. The miniature birds were marvelously wrought the feathers of granulated gold, the wings and breasts enriched with bands of color supplied by inserted gems. Precious stones gleamed like tiny sparks for the eyes. Daintiest of all, the tail feathers were so finely made and curiously adjusted as to move at the slightest motion of the pendant loop, so that whenever the proud wearer should toss or shake her head two attendant doves would seem to balance themselves upon their perches as live birds do in swinging on a bough.

Summer Find You Miserable?

It's hard to do one's work when every day brings morning lameness, throbbing backache, and a dull, tired feeling. If you suffer thus, why not find out the cause? Likely it's your kidneys. Headaches, dizziness, and bladder irregularities may give further proof that your kidneys need help. Don't risk neglect! Use Doan's Kidney Pills. Thousands have been helped by Doan's. They should help you. Ask your neighbor!

A South Dakota Case

George Young, retired farmer, Howard, S. Dak., says: "I had kidney trouble and my back was lame and ached awfully. When I stooped I had sharp quick catches over my kidneys that made it hard to straighten them. The action of my kidneys was irregular. I used Doan's Kidney Pills and the backaches left, and my kidneys didn't trouble me."

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FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

Facial Blemishes

Sallow, muddy, roughened or blotched complexions are usually due to constipation.

When you are constipated, not enough of Nature's lubricating liquid is produced in the bowel to keep the food waste soft and moving. Doctors prescribe Nujol because it acts like this natural lubricant and thus secures regular bowel movements by Nature's own method—lubrication. Nujol is a lubricant—not a medicine or laxative—so cannot gripe. Try it today.

Nujol
A LUBRICANT—NOT A LAXATIVE

VICTIMS RESCUED

Kidney, liver, bladder and uric acid troubles are most dangerous because of their insidious attacks. Heed the first warning they give that they need attention by taking

LATHROP'S GOLD MEDAL HAARLEM OIL CAPSULES

The world's standard remedy for these disorders, will often ward off these diseases and strengthen the body against further attacks. Threesizes, all druggists. Look for the name Gold Medal on every box and accept no imitation.

Would Be Our Guest. Blinks—"People need something to make them think." Jinks—"Yes, and that something is brains."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

When a man gets too lazy to enjoy his vacation he obtains his salary under false pretenses.

There is a vast difference between theoretical and practical religion.

Wars are caused by selfishness. Our Christianity is so immensely superior to us.

When Opportunity knocks on the door, Fear sometimes bolts in.

The key to success has the best possible resemblance to a night key.

Many a man doesn't realize that he married an angel until she begins to do the harp act.

A married woman seldom wastes words on her husband, though she uses all her has.

It's easier for a dentist to fill an aching void than a long-felt want.

A death a day keeps Safety away.

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HINDERCOX'S Removes Corns, Calluses, etc., stops all pain, causes comfort to the feet, makes walking easy. 50c by mail or at Drug Store. H. S. Chemical Works, Patented, N. Y.

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