

The Black Menace

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

Speed left us to report back to the Star, where his job was very elastic as fitted his character of a scion of wealth, for he was now given much more latitude by his father, having once, at least proved his capacity for making good. Ravenal, too, departed, with much head-shaking and finally, my work very nicely cleared up, I closed the laboratory and decided to return to our apartment, where I knew that Kennedy was impatiently fretting at his enforced rest.

A LOT OF THINKING

I found Craig still weak, though slowly improving. He moved restlessly in bed as I recounted the thrilling chase and peril of Clare and Speed. Though he did not say much, I could see that he was doing a great deal of anxious thinking, especially when I told him of the resolve from which none of us had been able to move Speed.

It was late that evening that I was sitting reading to Kennedy when the telephone rang. Before I could answer it Kennedy, who was becoming decidedly nervous, reached over the side of the bed and grasped the instrument from the table where he kept it.

"What—you—Miss Claremont?" I heard him repeat, as his face betrayed utter amazement. "You are at Breshkaya's? What in the world—what's that? Jack is there? Yes—yes—I'll be right up. Get someone—a policeman—anyone—don't stay alone. Yes—I'll be there—as soon as I can get there."

He hung up the receiver, and in spite of his wounds and his weakness, leaped out of bed. But he stopped short as he started to walk and his face betrayed the pain he strove to conceal. Mentally he might be as alert as ever. But he was not physically himself, and I was more concerned over him than over the whole case, now.

"Remember," I cautioned, "What the doctor said."
"Hang the doctor," he growled, but just a little weakly, as he supported himself by one of the posts of the bed. "These people are children—they need a guardian."

"What's the matter?" I asked, hoping that in this way I might lead up to some argument that would dissuade him.

"Matter enough. Clare had a telephone message from Breshkaya herself that evening. Breshkaya said that Speed was at her apartment—with her—and drunk. She was icily insulting, Clare said. You know what a message like that would mean—Clare would go up there and see for herself if it was the last thing she did. I asked her if she had gone. She had—was telephoning from Breshkaya's."

APPARENTLY DRUGGED

"And was Speed there?" I asked, seeing how hopeless my attempt at delay was, for Kennedy was struggling, as excitement brought back some of his strength, to array himself in street clothes.

"Yes—apparently under the influence of some drug."
"Whew!" I whistled. "Well, you remember what I told you," he said. "Where was Breshkaya?" "There when Clare arrived—alone. She taunted her—then disappeared into the next room—and that was the last Clare saw of her. Evidently she put it over on Speed—and was satisfied just with stirring up trouble between him and Clare—a refinement of torture, I take it. She left word with her colored maid that when Clare removed the intruder she would return. The intruder was Speed."

Kennedy was evidently very much vexed at Speed for getting himself in such a predicament and well he might be, for it was a rather risky position, especially in the eyes of a high-spirited girl like Clare.

"What happened?" I asked, as he finished dressing, with my aid, for I saw now that it was useless to try to hold him back.

"That's what I don't know and want to find out. Speed's unconscious, apparently, and Clare is almost frantic—between fear and doubt."

We hurried out and summoned a cab from a nearby stand.

"I tell you that woman's a devil," muttered Craig, as we bumped along through the still unfinished city.

We arrived at the apartment facing the park where we had waited so long the other day, only this time we did not pause, but entered and demanded to be taken to Breshkaya's.

However, I could see that, although he was still shaky, Kennedy had not lost his natural sense of caution, and he entered and proceeded to the suite with every care, as though we might be entering a trap. And indeed I did not blame him. As far as I knew, perhaps that was just what it was.

We came at last to the door and pushed the buzzer. It was immediately opened, and we could see down a wide hall that Clare was still there. As we entered she almost ran toward us, her face flushed with excitement, appealing to Kennedy.

Quickly she led him down the hall to a very luxurious living room. On a deep Oriental divan lay Speed, in a most uncomfortable position. His eyes were partly open, glassy, and he was breathing very rapidly, but it was evident that he knew only vaguely what was going on about him.

Clare was almost hysterical as she glanced from the man she loved, about at the sybaritic splendor of the apartment of a woman she hated.

"I got her message, the vixen, she began, talking rapidly and quite as much for the benefit of the negro maid as for us. "Of course, I came up here right away. She was positively insulting. Even Jack did not know me—what is it, Professor Kennedy? She said she thought he must be drunk. Is he?"

A glance from Kennedy's practical eye was sufficient to remove that possibility, even to give him a pretty good clue as to what drug Speed was under the influence of.

"Tell him the next time he calls on a lady to remember he is a gentleman," the hussy sneered as she left me," recounted Clare, with blazing eyes. "What did she mean? I can't imagine. It was then that I called you."

Kennedy bent over Speed and began feeling his pulse, as he moved uneasily, as though trying to throw off the effects of the drug. Then he began searching through Speed's pockets, as if to determine whether he had been robbed. He had not, of course. Breshkaya was far too clever for that. In fact I felt sure that she was far too clever to have us there if there was a thing that might be likely to react on herself.

A SMALL BOTTLE

As Kennedy's hand reached into an inside pocket, he pulled from Speed's coat a little bottle. He held it up, uncorked it and first smelled, then tasted a few drops that remained in the vial.

"Chloral," he muttered.

By this time Speed was much recovered. Under the soothing touch and care of Kennedy he moved, his eyes cleared a bit, and he began looking dazedly about.

"Wh-where am I?" he moaned, as if striving to recollect.

"What happened—tell me?" prompted Kennedy.

Slowly, as he came back to consciousness, Speed began to talk. "I met her—at the Crystal Palace. Jameson-Ravenal they were right. She said she had some papers—some letters—here. I seemed to fall for it—I had a plan—I came here—with her."

Speed shifted his position, as his mind grew clearer. "When she was getting the papers, there were two glasses of wine poured for us on the table. Her back was turned. I dropped some of that stuff in her glass. I thought under a drug she might talk. At least I might search. Then she came back—handed me the papers. They were nothing. I soon saw that as I studied them. Then she proposed a toast. I drank it. I waited for her to pass away—that's the last I remember."

Kennedy was listening attentively. I saw that he was trying to reconstruct the event. And as he did so a quiet smile played about his face. Speed was now able to wave a gesture or two as

he talked.

"Where were the drinks?" asked Craig.

"On that table."

"And the papers?"

"Over in that cabinet."

TWO ORDERS

Kennedy looked about keenly. Then he stood over by the table, on which he placed two glasses taken from another table.

"Walter," he directed, "stand over there. Face the cabinet."

I did so. And as I did, I was surprised to see that in a mirror over the cabinet I could see the table beside which Kennedy was standing. As I watched, I saw his hand in the mirror, pouring something apparently, into the glass. I turned.

"Still it does not explain it," I suggested impressed.

"Now stand by the table, where I am," Craig directed, as the eyes of both Clare and Speed dilated. "Near the glass."

I did so and he handed me a letter from his pocket turning partly as he did so. "Read it," he ordered.

I tried to do so.

I looked down at the table. My glass had been moved and an empty one was in its place.

Kennedy laughed.

"Don't you see?" he cried in his old-time glee. "She saw Speed drugging her drink. She did not betray a thing to him—let him think he was getting away with it. Instead, she coolly handed him some papers. While he wasn't looking she switched the glasses. That is all. Then she waited till the drug took effect on him. Finally she called Miss Claremont. You can be sure that she figured it all out. You have nothing on her. She has it on you—you tried to drug her first, Jack. It was easy money for Breshkaya."

Chapter 16

The Raid

Both the cleverness of Breshkaya and the boldness of the Black Menace determined on sterner measures, although he was careful to betray nothing as long as we might be overheard here.

We made a hasty search of Breshkaya's apartment, but as was to have been expected, we discovered nothing, for she was far too clever to leave the place with us in it and forget anything that was of any importance.

Speed was far enough recovered from his drugging by this time to be taken home in a cab. Even yet Clare had not recovered from the shock of finding her lover in another woman's apartment, in spite of the ready explanation. As for Speed, he did not say much. Twice, once with Clare and now again, he had tried his own hand at the game, and each time he had tried his own hand at the game, and each time he had failed.

Kennedy was pretty well done out when I managed to get him back at our apartment and was glad enough to retire.

The next day much as he hated it Craig was forced to remain very quiet for the effort of the night before had been a great tax on his strength.

However it did not keep his mind from working and I could tell by his growing restlessness that he was better. In fact, it was soon after luncheon that he began to feel a final return of his old strength and energy. I knew restraint was useless.

HARD TO TELL

"Walter," he remarked, after a long period of silence in which I saw that he was planning something, "there is no telling what these criminals may pull off next. And I'm always in favor of getting the jump on the other fellow. They think I'm down and out. I'm just going to give them the surprise of their lives."

He paused and I watched him anxiously, fearful that he was going to overtax his strength again. But this time he seemed quite equal to the task.

"I'm going to make a final cleanup of that house of mystery out there," he announced finally.

"A regular raid?" I inquired.

"No—I don't know the authorities out there well enough for that. I don't want someone to tip the Black Menace off that I am coming. As it is, we can't be sure just how much influence that Black Menace may have, through his wealthy victims. I'm not even going to tell Speed and Clare until we are actually ready to start."

Quickly he thought out his plan of campaign and, as he explained it to me, I must admit that I was forced to confess that it was likely to prove a good one.

At least it had the merit of a surprise attack; one that would take the place off guard.

While I made arrangements to secure the fast cars, three of which he decided would be sufficient, Craig over the telephone took care of the legal details of the raid.

On his own evidence he was able to make sure that he would have warrants out for "John Doe" and "Jane Doe." As he revealed to me that part of his plans I wondered whom he meant. Was it the polished Monsieur Jacques and the sylph-like Madam Rone? Or was it the Black Menace and Breshkaya... or some, third party?

Once having set the machinery in motion, Kennedy was impatient to be off, for every moment now meant that something might happen to anticipate us.

EVERYTHING READY

Accordingly it was with great relief that I saw that between us we had completed carefully and secretly, all the initial preparations for the raid on the Mystery Mansion.

"There's no use," Craig observed, "unless we can pull the thing off with a fair prospect of success. Now if you will call up Speed and Clare, and have them meet us in half an hour at Columbus Circle, I think we have done all that can be done until we get out there. Only be careful to say nothing about what we're doing. I've come to believe that this Black Menace has his spies everywhere."

Half an hour later we emerged from the subway at Columbus Circle, I think and there we found the three motor cars waiting for us, as I had arranged. A few moments later there arrived some private detectives from a downtown bureau, and by the next train came Speed and Clare highly excited by the cryptic invitation that I had given them over the telephone.

Like a general disposing his forces Kennedy now outlined his plan, which, briefly, was that we should leave immediately in the three cars. Of one I was to take charge. Speed, now totally recovered from his drugging and reconciled with Clare, was placed in charge of another, and I was relieved to see that he was less headstrong and quite ready to take orders from Kennedy. Craig himself took the third, and in each of the three he placed four of the private detectives from the bureau.

"I think, Miss Claremont," he decided finally, "that you had better come along with me in my car."

Speed smiled rather sheepishly but did not raise any protest.

Thus we set out and soon were over the bridge and out along the road which we had travelled so many times lately. It was only then that Kennedy revealed to the operatives where we were bound, so careful was he to guard the secret from a possible telephone warning.

THE PLAN OF ATTACK

Outside the village of Heaton Hills we halted and there we separated, as part of the plan of attack which Kennedy had worked out for us.

"My idea," he outlined, "is that we shall approach this house from three directions at once—from the front road in each way, and from a back road that passes some quarter of a mile behind it. You will each proceed to a bend in the road just out of sight of the place and wait. The signal for us all to close in will be a daylight rocket which I will fire, since it will take me a little longer to get into position on the back road. Then our parties can converge on the place at precisely the same moment and there will be no chance of escape in any direction."

His plan was simple to understand and seemed strategically correct. My party was delegated to approach from the road in front of the house in the easternly direction. The other, with Speed was to come at the place from the west along the same road. Thus there could be no way of their getting off at either of the two gates that opened from the grounds to the road, one used as an entrance and the other as an exit. From this side it seemed that the road would be effectively guarded.

For himself, Kennedy planned that he would take the back road, to the south and come up from the rear, cross-country, cutting off the retreat which the other two attacking parties would invite. Above all, Craig cautioned us to exercise care, as we waited, not to convey any alarm to cars that might be passing at the time.

We separated and drove through the town as though we were perfect strangers to each other. Our first lookout was to allow Kennedy to get a start in the detour that was necessary to reach the back road. My detour which I chose to come around on the other side of the house without passing it, was much shorter, and I started off to make it, leaving Speed to drive about a bit before shooting out on the road to his position, which was nearest the village.

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WAITING FOR THE SIGNAL

We arrived soon at the turn in the road just before it passed the Mystery House, and while we watched for Kennedy's signal, I had the driver of the car left the hood and pretend an elaborate tinkering with the motor to cover our stop by the road side. Nothing passed as we waited except a delivery wagon, and as that did not turn into the house, I felt reassured that we were so far unobserved.

"There's the rocket," exclaimed one of the operatives. Through an opening in the trees we could see Kennedy's signal.

From our point of vantage it was only a matter of minutes for us to reach the house. We drove forward, turned in at the exit from the grounds and left the car square across the gateway so as to barricade it.

"Come on!" I shouted to the four operatives, as we leaped out with drawn revolvers and proceeded on a run up the cinder drive.

From the other direction along the road I could see Speed already turning in. He noted how I had left my car, backed his own across the entrance in the same way and with his four men, began running up the driveway.

As I ran I could see that Kennedy must have got somewhat of a start of us, for already his party was visible, emerging from a clump of woods in the rear.

Thus we converged on the house, almost without warning, and I am convinced that it was only the suddenness of the onslaught that saved us from a rapid fire of bullets from those in the house.

(Continued Next Week)

MUTT MAY BE NEXT
OPEN GOLF CHAMPION



Mutt in Action.
Mutt, of Mutt and Jeff fame, has invented the magnetic golf ball and he's going to play in the Open Golf Championship tournament this week. He may be the next champion. Watch for his "stunt" in The Tribune during the meet.

Had Confidence in Himself.
From the New York Sun and Globe. Confidence in one's self is an asset much to be desired, as has often been pointed out. Sometimes, however, confidence is likely to be overconfidence.

In the days when the Uganda railroad was first in operation there was placed in charge of a lonely station a babu who lived alone with a couple of native servants. His post was in the center of the "lion country" and though the railroad testified to the progress of civilization in Africa the trains ran only once a day and the lions and other wild game came to look upon it with contempt. Occasionally they made a raid on one of the lonelier stations and this was what caused this babu to wire headquarters frantically:

"Am besieged by five lions. Send one rifle and five cartridges."

George Carter, former Iowa, will come in for a large part of the credit for the \$1,000,000 saving which is shown in the United States printing bill for the year just closed. As head of the printing department the \$60,000 reduction in proof reading costs and \$50,000 in the costs of printing annual reports should be credited to him. No doubt he also had a hand in doing away with deluxe editions of government publications and elimination of embossed letter heads, two needless extravagances.

Among the poets of China the women predominate.

BEST EVER MADE STATES NELSON

"Tanlac ended my troubles and made me hale and hearty," is the characteristic statement of Roy Nelson, 5th St. and Pleasant View Drive, Des Moines, Iowa.

"Flu and a railroad accident left me where for two years I was almost a wreck. I lost my appetite and my stomach got out of kilter until what I ate always caused gas to form so bad the pressure of it made my heart palpitate and nearly cut off my breath. I ached in every muscle and joint, often had dizzy spells, was always nervous and felt wretched all the time."

"Tanlac built me up twelve pounds in weight and gave me the strength and energy of an iron worker. My appetite is fine again; I never have indigestion and always feel fine. Tanlac is the best medicine ever put in bottles."

Tanlac is for sale by all good druggists. Accept no substitute. Over 87 million bottles sold.

Tanlac Vegetable Pills are Nature's own remedy for constipation. For sale everywhere.—Advertisement.

Jazzy.
Jack—Giving a dance, eh? Who's going to furnish the music?
Clarence—Won't need any; there's a boiler factory next door.

CHILDREN CRY FOR "CASTORIA"

Especially Prepared for Infants and Children of All Ages

Mother! Fletcher's Castoria has been in use over 30 years to relieve babies and children of Constipation, Flatulency, Wind Colic and Diarrhea; allaying Feverishness arising therefrom, and by regulating the Stomach and Bowels, aids the assimilation of Food; giving natural sleep without opiates. The genuine bears signature

Chas. H. Fletcher.

Far Gone.
"In love, hey?"
"Why, he reads poetry to her over the telephone."

RECORD IN CROPS

Western Canada Farmers Assured of Bountiful Yields.

Conditions Reported From All Parts of the Provinces Satisfactory in the Highest Degree—Pass Expectations.

From as early as April 17, when seeding became general throughout the Western Canadian Provinces, was there anything but optimism in the feelings of the farmers of that country. An uninterrupted chain of favorable conditions have bound the early seeding data with the conditions of the crop today. There were no setbacks. There may have been a hail storm or two with some ill effects through portions of the country, but the track they took was so small that the percentage of loss was almost imperceptible compared with the whole. Rains fell just when needed, the sun shone as if regulated by the farmer himself, the ground, generally, was in perfect condition and fully responsive. It is now a question of rivalry between districts and provinces which will produce the greatest results in crop yields and averages. Out in Alberta, whether it be in the north or in the south, that which gave assurance, in a well-prepared seed bed, of an excellent crop is passing expectation, and experts say there will be produced a crop away greater than ever before in the history of the province, and Alberta has had some big yields. Then, in Saskatchewan there exist the same conditions. The extreme north and extreme south will vie with the east and west in the story at harvest and threshing time.

Manitoba, while not boastful, complacently watches fields of wheat, oats, rye and barley that promise to set a new record for that province.

The fact is apparent that Western Canada will have a crop yield in all grains away ahead of any year in the history of the country. This will be pleasing news to the thousands in the United States, who have friends and relatives farming in that country. It should not be forgotten that these crops will be raised on land that in many cases cost less than \$40 an acre and some of it was procured by merely homesteading. It is possible today to secure improved farms at very low figures, as well as raw or virgin prairie. Any Canadian government agent will gladly give information as to the condition of the crops, and dates when special rates may be had by those who wish to look over what is probably one of the greatest grain fields on the continent.—Advertisement.

Any summer resort folder with pictures is fascinating. The water is so blue.