

# THE COPPER HOUSE

A Detective Story

BY JULIUS REGIS

AUTHOR OF "NO 13 TORONTO"

"Don't you mean to?" she asked, with a rapid glance from a pair of eyes that just then struck him as being as dark as night.

"Not unless you ask me to again," he replied boldly.

The girl stopped and turned round. "Things haven't altered, you know," she said, and walked on. Leo looked round also. The two forest guards were still standing among the trees, looking down at them, but a third had joined them, and each of the three men held his gun in his hands.

The young man felt a little whiver pass through him. Ahead of him, though still some way off, he could see the greater part of the old avenue, which stretched for more than a mile from Karka gates to the house itself, which was still hidden behind some rising ground to the left. He thought he caught sight of two or three figures patrolling the avenue under the shade of the trees, but they vanished before he was quite certain. He began to wonder whether the girl by his side had given him the full explanation of the scene in the wood, but his thoughts took another turn, for now, through the thick foliage, he had a glimpse of the ponderous gables of the house, looking as though they were molded in green copper. The house, at all events, had not changed in appearance. He stepped on the terrace with its crumbling balustrade, and his eyes drank in the familiar scene, till the dust of years was blown away, and he was a boy once more. There was the square, massive building, its walls weather-stained and gray with age, supporting the steep copper-sheathed roof, which, from its queer slope, seemed half as high as the house, and looked like a medieval helmet, profaned by two tiers of windows; there were the two copper statues of Fortune with her cornucopia, and Mercury with his winged heels, a forgotten figure on either side of the steps, gazing blankly and silently at one another from their never-changing positions.

## CHAPTER V. In Which It Is Obvious That the Owner is a Guest in His Own House

Leonard Grath entered the Copper House like a visitor, hat in hand. A sunbeam lay right across the polished oak floor of the hall, and in the middle of the patch of light stood a tall, old lady, as upright as a grenadier, and as thin and dark as a Bedouin, who fixed a penetrating glance upon the newcomer. She went on crocheting a piece of lace, the other end of which was hidden in an old-fashioned basket-work satchel that hung on her left arm.

Leo stopped short, as though her look was an actual barrier, and bowed.

"Sonia Andreievna," said the old lady, in the tone of a drill sergeant on parade, "where have you been?"

The girl shot a covert glance at the young man, and threw down her riding whip.

"Aunt Lona," she replied meekly, "this gentleman has just been mistaken for a squirrel...."

"Sonia Andreievna"....the sharp voice interrupted, "speak sensibly; you know that I detest riddles."

"My name is Leonard Grath," the latter interposed, hastily, bowing again and feeling somewhat embarrassed.

The crocheted needles came to a standstill, and their owner took two strides towards him, and stared unblinkingly into his eyes. He noticed that, in spite of her iron-gray hair and lean, dried-up looks, she could hardly be more than 60. Her

imperious eyes still flashed with youthful energy, every movement betokened strength, and her whole bearing was that of a well bred lady, even though she might be a bit of a martinet. Like her niece, she was plainly dressed in black, with white ruffles, and a necklace of jet beads, which clicked gently as she moved.

"Leonard Grath," she echoed; "the owner?"

"Yes, I am afraid I have arrived rather unexpectedly, and if I have in any way...."

"Sonia Andreievna! pick up your whip at once" (the young man was quite startled) "and put it in its place. Yes, Mr. Grath, I cannot deny that you have taken us by surprise."

"Oh dear, I certainly never meant...."

"Sonia Andreievna! Do you see what time it is? Have I not told you a thousand times that we have a fixed hour for dinner?"

Her remarks seemed to Leo to be emphasized by a perfect regiment of exclamation points and he did not wonder that the girl darted away like an arrow from a bow. But to his surprise, no sooner were they alone, than the old lady's tone became almost cordial.

"I am Lona Ivanovna Bernin, and as your tenant I bid you welcome to the Copper House. You will give us the pleasure of your company at dinner? Good, let us have a cigar while we are waiting."

Still wondering, Leo allowed himself to be ushered to an armchair in the familiar old Empire drawing room on the left side of the hall. Lona Ivanovna offered him a cigar case, and herself took a Russian cigar, which she lighted with one hand. Leo was thinking what to say next, when she forestalled him.

"Have you come from abroad?"

"Yes, from California."

"Ah, California; a magnificent climate, I believe. No doubt you have become tired of living out there?"

"Not exactly, but I felt inclined to come home."

"Hm—Do you think of making a long stay?"

"That depends. You see, it isn't a question of climate, exactly...."

She pursed up her mouth and frowned.

"In my opinion, the climate of California is far preferable," she remarked, looking sharply at him.

"Very possibly, but this visit will be quite a change for me."

"How so?"

"Oh, there is so much that is new, I mean.... a whole lot of strange.... well, in short...."

Leo stopped short in confusion, and puffed away furiously at his cigar. The old lady blew a perfect ring, looked quizzically at him through it, and said dryly: "Young man, whatever you do, don't go and fall in love with Sonia!"

Leo stared dumfounded at his cigar. The conversation dropped, and silence reigned in the room, broken only by the buzzing of a stray bee on the window pane.

Dinner was over, and Leonard Grath the richer by several experiences. First of all, he had proved the truth of the old adage that: "Guests are hosts in the host's house," for was not he a guest and stranger, and moreover a thoroughly unwelcome one, in his own home? It seemed to him as though the girl and her aunt took it in turns to keep an eye on him; he could see them exchanging glances and whispers whose meaning was unintelligible to him, and what struck him as strangest of all, in the whole of that spacious house and its

adjoining buildings there appeared to be no living creature except the two ladies. He inquired, as a matter of politeness, for Mr. Andrei Bernin, who was stated to be in bed in his own room, and far too unwell to see the honored guest.

As soon as the dinner was over, Sonia, obeying a signal from her aunt, proposed a turn round the garden, and the two young people strolled along for a while in silence. It was getting towards sunset, and the rural orchestra was in full chorus: birds were fluting in a medley of youthful emulation, bumblebees droned in their drowsy baritones, and in the grass the crickets added their violin notes to the evening concert.

Now that Sonia Bernin in the flesh was alongside of him, Leo found her 10 times more interesting than when he had first seen her portrait on Wallion's table; her boyish unconstraint, added to a lissom, almost kittenlike grace, and her ready wit, gave him a delightful sensation of comradeship—but the minute he attempted to strike a note of intimacy, he ran up against a barrier of chilly reserve, and the pose of the boyish, black head became all of a sudden alarmingly ladylike. Whatever the reason might be, she appeared totally unimpressed by his masculine superiority, and this was a very novel experience for the spoiled young man.

"At length he remarked: "I had thought of staying some time at the Copper House, but it seems to me I am rather 'de trop' here."

She twisted a leaf between her lips like a cigaret. "How so?" she inquired.

"Oh, there's no doubt about it. The man at the gate showed it quite unmistakably—for one."

"With his gun, you mean? It was too bad; but you see, he naturally took you for an impostor, having heard that the owner of the Copper House was in America. I expect he will be discharged, in any case," she added.

"And you told me yourself to go away, as soon as ever you knew who I was," he continued.

"Wasn't it kind of me to warn you, when it is so dull here?" laughed the girl.

"It is not dull here, and that is not why you warned me," he retorted. She looked up, and their eyes met. For the second time that day, Leo saw hers dilate and darken. She did not reply, but hurried on a little, as though to evade him, but he kept step with her, and proceeded:

"As you know, your father wants to buy this property; it is a pity I can't have a talk with him about it. Your aunt is reticent, and you are mysterious. Won't you have a little pity on me?"

They had walked to the top of a slight rise, from which they could see down the greater part of the avenue. The girl stood still, panting a little. Suddenly she asked:

"Have you seen Mr. Tassler?"

Leo shook his head, and they were silent again. The girl seemed to be listening to something, rather uneasily. Far off in the sunlit stillness a rhythmic throbbing sound became audible; it approached with uncanny rapidity, getting louder every minute, then suddenly ceased altogether.

"Did you hear that?" whispered the girl.

"Yes," he answered. "A motorcycle has apparently stopped at Karka gates; it's a pity we can't see them from here, it must be someone from Stockholm."

As he said this, he remembered the young man with the attache-case, whom he had so unintentionally startled with Sonia's photograph, but as he was about to tell her of the occurrence, there was a dramatic interruption. A shot was fired at the gate, and it was followed by a long, thrilling cry. A few seconds later, a

eight years in Albany in which he did more than any other man of his time to destroy invisible government—not temporarily, but by permanent reorganization. He kept on one side the passionate devotion of district politicians while winning on the other the passionate devotion of reformers who hated machine politics. Above all, he kept alive in touch with the masses, becoming the first great representative of the old urban section of Jacksonian democracy, and releasing its political strength as no one else has ever done.

The prime requisites of good autobiography are honesty and insight. If Al Smith exhibited any

man came dashing up the avenue as though he was running for his life. Leo at once recognized his fellow passenger, and the girl cried out in a voice of terrified dismay: "Sergius, Sergius!"

The fugitive raised his face, which was deathly pale, and without stopping, he exclaimed: "Rastakov!"

The girl turned round to Leo, and said in a rapid stifled voice: "Hide yourself; and, mind, you have seen nothing!"

With that, she sprang down from the little hill, followed by the fugitive, and both disappeared. Almost immediately afterwards, two more men came running up the avenue: one was the porter who had threatened Leo with the same gun that he still carried in his hand, and the other was a tall fellow dressed as a motor cyclist. They also vanished in the direction of the house.

Without further delay, Leo hastened back along the same path by which he had come, and in five seconds he came in sight of the terrace in front of the Copper House. He saw the man with the case run up the steps, hesitate for a moment, then dash into the house. The girl followed on his heels, and the porter and the cyclist reached the terrace to find it deserted. Then, as though by the touch of a magic wand, some more men appeared from both sides of the house. These, with the two men already mentioned, made a party of nine, of whom four carried guns. They approached the house at the double. The cyclist called out some order in a commanding voice, and began to mount the terrace steps. Leo reached the spot at the same moment, and exclaimed: "What's wrong?"

The motor cyclist took no notice of him.

Again a shot rang out, this time inside the Copper House; most of the men had passed out of earshot on the other side of the house, but the cyclist, the porter, and one other unknown man, ran into the hall, together with Leo.

The old lady advanced to meet them, with a revolver in her hand. She looked firmly and menacingly at the intruder and said: "Rastakov, did I invite you to come in?"

The cyclist halted.

"Who fired, Lona Ivanovna?" he demanded.

"I did."

"Where is he?"

"Whom do you mean?"

"Oh, you know perfectly well, that thief Bernard Jenin; what have you done with him?"

Lona Ivanovna thrust the revolver into her workbag, looked resignedly at the cyclist, and said: "You may look for him."

Leo, who understood nothing of this hurried interchange of questions, looked on bewildered. Rastakov caught sight of the fugitive's case lying open on the floor, caught it up, and flung it against the wall with an oath, for it was empty.

"I will have him, dead or alive," he shouted, "and the damned document, too!"

He ran halfway up the stairs to the first floor, but turned round as though he had remembered something.

"And what's more," he cried across the hall, "I know how pigheaded you are, Lona Ivanovna! All right, if you would rather have the chief to deal with, just let me know! But beware of meddling with Tarraschin's memorandum, for it means death!"

With that he disappeared. Lona Ivanovna took Leo by the arm, and drew him with unexpected force, though not unkindly, into the dining room after her.

"It's a case for the police!" he began.

"Don't mix yourself up in this," she said kindly. "Sonia, they want to search the house; you must see that Mr. Grath is spared hearing anything more of Rastakov...."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

qualities in office they were honest and a realistic shrewdness. It will not be easy to carry them over into a book. It will take both courage and a special knack. But if they are carried over, we shall learn something more about not merely Al Smith but some of the most important currents in our modern American life.

### Hard to Suit

From TIT-BITS

Golfer—Who has just gone round in 112: Well, how do you like my game?  
Caddie—I suppose it's all right, but I still prefer golf.

### THE PERIOD "DOLLS."

1880.

A small maid sat in candle light, By the fire's dying glow; Her dress was sprayed with springs of pink Her pantlets peeped below.

Her childish voice had a woman's tones, A-crooning soft and low, As she stroked to sleep her old rag doll.

With the joy that mothers know, Its eyes were dots, its face quite flat, Its hair a hank of tow; Its shoes were made of woolen cloth, Its dress, a rag or so.

1890. Another maid, at tiny desk,— 'Twas "speakin' day" at school; Her spreading skirts were ruffed and frilled, Her hair adorned with tulle.

Her arms about her modish doll, She glanced toward teacher's stool; Then softly breathed in dolly's ear, "Don't whisper! that's the rule."

A doll of bisque with a baby's face, Its eye a limpid pool, Its slippers flat of leather bronzed, And dressed in something cool.

1920. A flapper paced the crowded streets, Her flaunting charms to try; Her arms were bare, her legs were nude, Her skirt above knee high.

Upon her arm a lanky doll Smirked up at passers by; A languid lid made dark with kohl, Part veiled each luring eye.

A vamping doll, with a woman's face, Coiffure of henna dye; Its patent pumps had heels like spikes, Its dress, a belt and tie.

—Sam Page.

Earlier Missouri River. From Minneapolis Journal.

All of North Dakota, and most of South Dakota and Montana, were once in the Hudson's Bay watershed. Says a recent bulletin from the Department of the Interior:

This is not strictly news, since it dates back several million years, to the era before the Great Ice Age, but the theory of the government geologists will be news to most Northwest people.

Evidence now leads geologists to believe that in that distant period the upper Missouri and the Yellowstone flowed toward the northeast, their waters finding a way eventually to Hudson's Bay. The Red River flowed northward then as it does today. The head of the Missouri was about where the James River now joins it, in South Dakota, so the Missouri in those days was a comparatively short and puny stream.

Then came the Great Ice Age. The great sheets of ice spread southwestward, blocked the northern outlet of the Missouri, and dammed up its waters until they were strong enough to form the gorge now followed by the Missouri through the Dakotas. The Red River, as man has known for some time, was turned southward by the ice and poured its waters through Big Stone and Traverse lakes and by way of the Minnesota river to the Mississippi at Fort Snelling, cutting in a few centuries the picturesque basin of the Minnesota.

At this time some of the drainage between the Red river and the Missouri was diverted southward to form the James river, joining the Missouri.

When the ice sheets receded, the Red river, rather reluctantly, turned to flow northward again, but the Missouri and the James had made their beds and preferred to lie in them. The map of the Northwest after this "temporary" shift of a few centuries, took on its present aspect, which man of today is satisfied to call permanent.

Thus, if the geologists are right, came the vast length of the mighty Missouri which with the lower Mississippi forms the world's longest river.

### Marriage Contracts.

From Kansas City Star.

A promissory note containing the clause that the signer wouldn't be obligated to pay in case he had had any financial setback would be of somewhat limited value to the payee. The setback would be pretty certain to come—and to be genuine, so far as the giver of the note is concerned. It isn't wholly different when the parties to a marriage contract, which at one time was an even more serious matter than the making and signing of a note, agree in advance that if affections should by chance be diverted to someone else or other similar contingency should arise, the contract would be null and void. Here is anticipating failure of an agreement at the time it is made, a condition that should mean no agreement to begin with.

So we may not be surprised that Mrs. Eugene O'Neill is suing her playwright husband for divorce. For it was understood at the time of the marriage and so nominally in the bond that love for another by either party would nullify the agreement. The wonder is that this "sacred" contract has held for a matter of some eleven years. But the playwright now is reported to have found another more to his liking and the original contract is to be terminated at Reno.

Here is the fatal weakness in the logic of the companionate marriage enthusiasts. It's about like a determination to steer away from the ditch while keeping the eyes fixed upon it at the same time. Our counsel to the imaginary modernists is that they had better go into the thing—marriage, not in the ditch—for keeps, or steer clear of it altogether.

Q. Where is the "graveyard of the iceberg?" H. R.

A. About the iceberg get out of the Labrador current, disintegration goes on naturally and more and more rapidly until the bergs finally disappear about 400 miles south of Nova Scotia. This region is called the graveyard of the iceberg.

Proof Enough. From Loughborough, England, Herald.

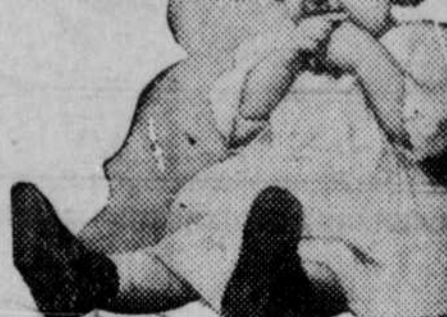
Magistrate: Are you sure he was intoxicated?  
Policeman: No, sir, not positive, but his wife says he brought home a manhole cover and tried to play it on the gramophone!

### It All Depends.

From Answers.

Mistress: Did I see you kissing somebody in the garden this morning, Sarah—the milkman or the postman?  
Maid: Er—ah—was it about half past seven, ma'am, or a quarter past eight?

# What Will you do



## When your Children Cry for It

There is hardly a household that hasn't heard of Castoria! At least five million homes are never without it. If there are children in your family, there's almost daily need of its comfort. And any night may find you very thankful there's a bottle in the house. Just a few drops, and that colic or constipation is relieved; or diarrhea checked. A vegetable product; a baby remedy meant for young folks. Castoria is about the only thing you have ever heard doctors advise giving to infants. Stronger medicines are dangerous to a tiny baby, however harmless they may be to grown-ups. Good old Castoria! Remember the name, and remember to buy it. It may spare you a sleepless, anxious night. It is always ready, always safe to use; in emergencies, or for everyday ailments. Any hour of the day or night that Baby becomes fretful, or restless, Castoria was never more popular with mothers than it is today. Every druggist has it.



### Automobile Puzzle

"Have we plenty of gas now before we start?"

"The indicator says one-half—but I don't know whether that means half full or half empty."

### To Cool a Burn

Use Hanford's Balsam of Myrrh  
Money back for first bottle if not suited. All dealers.

### "Into the Trade"

Many titled English women have "gone into trade." One of them is a barber, although she styles herself "coiffeur."

Near Parambuco, Brazil, is a bandit who, since 1920, has terrorized five Brazilian states and remained undefeated.

Contrary men won't sign petitions; and that's a commendatory word said for contrariness.

Folks like to move from one flat to another until they find it doesn't do any good.

Few can resist the temptation to flaunt culture.



## Makes Life Sweeter

Children's stomachs sour, and need an anti-acid. Keep their systems sweet with Phillips Milk of Magnesia! When tongue or breath tells of acid condition—correct it with a spoonful of Phillips. Most men and women have been comforted by this universal sweetener—more mothers should invoke its aid for their children. It is a pleasant thing to take, yet neutralizes more acid than the harsher things too often employed for the purpose. No household should be without it.

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"Up to Now. From New York World."  
The news that former Governor Smith has signed a contract for the book publication of his autobiography promises one forthcoming volume that ought to be unique. We have had many and diverse political autobiographies in this country. The authors range from Davy Crockett, son of the backwoods, to George Frisbie Hoar, son of Massachusetts' austerest cultural traditions; from Thurlow Weed and Tom Platt, adepts in crooked politics, too. La Follette and Tom L. Johnson, apostles of reform. Some are as fascinating as Carl Schurz's, some as dry as John Sherman's.