

STAIRS OF SAND

A TALE OF A MYSTERY

BY ERNEST DE LANCEY PIERSON

"THE SECRET OF THE MARIONETTES," "A DANGEROUS QUEST," ETC.

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CHAPTER XXI.

For some minutes Job Hendricks felt too weak to rise from the floor, where he had flung himself down over the trap. But soon the sense that his safety was only temporary forced him to think of his position, and drew his attention to the talking that was going on in the room below.

Still lying there, he peered down through a crack into the room, and, as the lamp was lit again, he could see the two men he judged to be department officers doing their best to revive the unconscious Ellison. "I may as well wait until he is able to explain matters," said Job to himself, "for then he will be able to direct them, and show how I managed to get out of the ambush. I only hope that this time Ellison's agent will remain unconscious for half an hour more."

He rose unsteadily to his feet, and, after stretching himself, looked about him.

The place in which he found himself, as viewed in the faint light of a small window set high up in the wall, was filled with rubbish. It must have been the hospital for all the old furniture of the establishment, and was crowded with legless chairs, broken barrels, and a pile of musty lumber that filled the air with a strange, earthy smell.

It would not be safe for him to linger there any longer. Below in the street the police probably surrounded the building. He must look for his way to freedom in other directions.

He left the dismal place, and, passing through a door, found himself in a long, bare hall, faintly illumined by a gas light flickering at the further end. As he entered this corridor he saw the shadow of what seemed to be a man reflected on the further wall. Was this possibly some one set to guard the escape? Job turned back, and then saw to the right of him a spiral staircase of iron, leading to the upper regions. Surely in that direction his course lay, for he knew that by this time all the approaches to the building below must be guarded.

The reflection of the figure on the wall at the end of the hall puzzled him, for it was the shadow of a man, and yet it did not move. He was out of sight and maintained a silent attitude. Job was in a position to take everything for granted, and had no desire to go and investigate. He was pleased that he had not been discovered and that this silent sentry was either asleep or had not heard him. Slowly he mounted the stairs, still keeping his eyes on that silhouette that was outlined blackly on the wall.

"Ah, if I only had not been deprived of a weapon," he muttered, as with caution he mounted the stairs, thankful at least that the body on the wall had not shown any signs of life.

The stairs led him into another hall, much like that he had just left, and on each side of it ran long partitions, intersected here and there with doors. He tried one of these, only to hear a grumbling voice asking what he wanted. He started away. As he paused to listen, he heard snoring resounding from various parts of the place. Evidently most of the lodgers had retired for the night. Others who had "work," would probably not appear until daylight.

Would it be possible, he thought, to secrete himself in one of the unoccupied rooms, and then, when a chance offered, make his way out of the building? Then he figured that by this time the police would be acquainted with the manner of his escape, and having invested the building on all sides below, would proceed to investigate the inmates one by one, as they had done on many a similar occasion. No, he was not secure in this "hotel" at all, and the only safety for him lay in getting away as far as possible from the neighborhood.

Going to the end of the hall where the window stood open, he peered down on the street. It was too high to risk a leap, and, even if such a thing could be accomplished in safety, he would only fall into the hands of the men who were lying in wait for him.

"Ah, if my work were only done, I'd go back with them gladly," he muttered, as he turned away with a sigh. "But there is more that I have to do, and until then the police and I, I hope, will remain strangers."

Near the window through which he had been peering was an open door, and without knowing exactly why, he entered. The room was empty, but along one side ran a shelf, on which were ranged various rusty candlesticks containing pieces of candle, evidently for the use of the "guests."

Job helped himself to the largest piece of candle he could find and appropriated some of the matches. "May need 'em," he muttered.

"This enterprise may carry me into many dark places."

As he came out of this room he thought he heard the sound of steps below and the echoes of muffled voices.

"They must have got on my trail," he muttered. "Well, the only thing to do is to try and reach the roof; perhaps it may communicate with some other building. If not—well, I shall be caught."

As he approached the stair again the sound of the voices below became louder, and, from the fragments of conversation that drifted up to him, he judged that the police were making an examination of the rooms on the lower floor.

"It will take 'em some time to do that," was the thought that was running through his mind, "and in the meantime who knows but I may be able to show them a clean pair of heels!"

He had reached the stairs again, and, cautiously, that he might not awake the sleepers, ascended them slowly.

Wherever he was investigating the lower rooms, he did not take any precaution to muffle his voice, and fragments of what was said satisfied Job that the police were in the building.

He had now reached the upper floor, which, from the silence that prevailed, he judged to be unoccupied. There was a small iron ladder leading to the roof, and, without a moment's hesitation, he climbed this, and, opening the trap, closed it behind him, and found himself on the roof.

It was only through this trap that they could possibly find him, so he thought if he could only weight down the trap, they would have no easy task in reaching him. At the same time, if he found a way of escape from the roof, his enemies had only to wait, and he must eventually fall into their hands.

He closed the trap carefully, and, seeing a pile of old lumber near at hand, by degrees brought the boards over in his strong arms and piled them on top. When he found there was nothing else of a weighty nature that he could pile over the door, he wiped his forehead of its perspiration and sat down on the pile of boards to consider the situation.

Looked at in any light, his position seemed to be desperate, for the place was guarded below, and the house was full of policemen. He rose and walked to the further end of the roof, and then saw below him a low building that looked as if it were a factory of some sort. Then he wandered to the front of the building, and, looking down, thought he could see a policeman walking back and forth, and, beyond, others. So he returned to the contemplation of the little factory. If he could only reach that roof, it would not be hard to get to the street. But it lay far below him, and to jump would be impossible. Just then, as he was walking about, feeling very uneasy, he tripped over a rope fastened to one of the chimneys, and which at some time must have been employed in the work of painting the building.

It was only a short piece, but he took it up tenderly, undid the knots and then found that it was still of too short a length to be of any service to him. Rope in hand, he drew near the brink of the roof and peered down into the depths. The roof of the factory, or whatever it was, lay far below, but he saw a small projection jutting out from the building on which he was standing, about half way down. Ah, if the rope had only been double its length! Then a thought occurred to him whereby he might make this little rope do double service.

Fastening it to a hook, where a lightning rod had formerly been, he threw the noose end over the wall, where it dangled in space. Under the knot he had tied about the hook he placed a candle and lit it. His intention was that by the time he had reached the lower projecting ledge, the candle would have burned its way through the rope, it would drop into his hands and then he would be able to use it again to reach the roof of the factory. Having arranged this, Job scrambled over the edge of the parapet, and, climbing to the rope, launched himself into space. He knew that it was possible that the candle might burn the rope through before he reached the ridge of safety, but it was necessary that he should take the risk. In his swinging descent he could not help but look upward at the flaring candle, the progress of which was to decide his fate, for life or death. An old rope like that must consume rapidly. Would it ever last until he had reached the ledge?

But his movements had been so precipitate that he finally swung over on to the ledge and rested there, before the rope finally swept out with a trail of fire, the end of which he still held. At the same time he heard a rumbling noise above his head which showed that the trap door had been forced open, and that the police must now be upon the roof.

They must soon see the candle, which in that calm and placid night was probably still burning, and they would know where to look for the man who was attempting to escape.

The ledge to which Job clung was before a great iron door probably used to admit goods into the establishment. He found a hook to which he could fasten the end of his rope, sadly charred by fire, and again launched himself into space.

It seemed to him that it was hours before he reached the end of the rope, and he could hear the angry voices on the top of the roof. Of course, as soon as they found the candle, they must find, too, where he had gone.

He had come to the end of the cable, and as there was nothing else to do, let himself drop, where, he did not know, for it was very dark. He struck something hard—the roof of the factory—and then rolled down until stopped by a curving gutter. He looked with a shudder down into the street, which, though not far below, was of a sufficient distance to have killed him had he fallen.

(To be continued.)

Not Completely Filled.
"Isn't this awful?" asked the common-looking man on the crowded street car. "Isn't this awful? Why, there are already 185 people on this car."

"It is awful," agreed the person addressed, who was a street railway magnate. "It is awful! There ought to be at least twenty more in here. I'll take that conductor's number and have him on the carpet to-morrow."—Baltimore American.

In the Far West.
"What do you do with a man that steals a horse out here?" asked the tourist on the coach.

"String him up," blurted Amber Pete, in forcible tones.

"And a man that steals an automobile?"

"Give him a purse for riding the country of a nuisance."

AS TO PUBLIC SPEAKING.

Few Great Speeches Come Without Previous Study.

Some wonder has been expressed at the practice David B. Hill has lately adopted of reading his speeches to his audiences, though it is said that he reads with such a show of off-hand speaking that those in the crowd who can hear him but cannot see him do not discover any difference. Mr. Hill is a practiced public speaker, and can unquestionably do his subject justice without the use of manuscript. If necessity arises he is eminently satisfactory as an extemporaneous speaker. These are formative times, however, and he is probably anxious to keep his record straight, and to be able to produce the proof against misrepresentations.

Some kinds of speeches are not much hurt in effect by being read by the speaker. Others depend altogether on the style of delivery. Senator Beveridge, of Indiana, would not be a success as a speech reader. Deliveries that depend more on flights of phraseology and graceful emphasis than deep deliberation must be unburdened by manuscript.

Reading speeches is getting to be quite the fashion. Gov. Nash read his speech as temporary chairman of the Republican State convention from typewritten pages, and Gen. Grosvenor, the permanent chairman, also read his speech.

Ex-Senator Hill is a busy man, and probably had not the time to commit his speech to memory. Ex-President Cleveland has plenty of time, and probably had his Tilden Club remarks "pat."

Of one thing the admiring public may rest assured: Very few, if any, of the great speeches come spontaneously from the speaker without previous reflection and preparation, not only as to the sentiment and general line of thought, but as to the language employed. Even Ingersoll's great speech placing Blaine in nomination for President in this city in 1876, when seemed an immediate brilliant inspiration rather than a study, was rehearsed in bed to the speaker's anxious brother before the convention met. The brother went to Robert's room early in the morning to spur him to preparation. "How will this do?" asked Robert, as he raised himself from the pillows. Then that great speech was delivered for the first time, and to only one man.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Lady or Tiger.

An unsolved mystery is that connected with the late Frank R. Stockton's story of "The Lady or the Tiger." At the end of the tale the hero is left in the arena, about to open one of two doors; behind the first is a tiger, and behind the second a girl who loves the hero. Another girl, who also loves him, and who knows the secret of the doors, signals him which one to open. At this point the story ends, and Mr. Stockton never confided to any one his opinion of the hero's fate.

"I'm sure I should like to tell you," he said to an interviewer, "but I can't, because I really don't know myself."

The story set everybody guessing, and one day, at a reception, when it was a topic of debate, Mr. Stockton told Rudyard Kipling that he thought of going to India.

"I'm glad of it," said Kipling, enthusiastically, "and I'll tell you what we'll do with you! We'll lure you into the jungle, and have you seized and bound. We'll have you turned on your back, and get one of our biggest elephants to stand over you with his foot poised above your head. Then I'll say, in my most insinuating tone, 'Come now, Stockton, which was it, the lady or the tiger?'"

At one time Mr. Stockton was the guest of honor at a dinner given in Washington by a member of President Harrison's cabinet. When the dessert was served it proved to be two large plates of ice cream, one an orange ice in the mold of a tiger, the other of vanilla, in the form of a woman. The plates were set in front of the hostess, and she turned to her guest with a prematurely triumphant air.

"Which kind do you prefer, Mr. Stockton?" she asked.

"A little of both, of you please."

A Tailor's Cunning.

"You've made a mistake in my bill," said a young man, excitedly yesterday to the proprietor of a prominent tailoring house.

"That can't be," asserted the tailor, mildly.

"Oh, but it's so," exclaimed the youth in a hurry. "Look here! Ten dollars too much charged on this bill." The proprietor compared the bill with his books.

"You're right, Mr. Blank," he admitted. "I'll take \$10 off, and how much did you say you wanted to pay on account?"

The young man grew red, coughed, and finally produced a five-dollar note. "That works every time," confided the tailor to an interested bystander, after the customer had departed. "Nothing brings a man here in such a hurry as to overcharge him on his bill. When a customer gets a little backward and dodges the place, I send him a bill overcharging him. He comes on a rush to have the mistake corrected and a little diplomacy does the rest. Best of all, it doesn't hurt his feelings, is would a visit from a collector."

Bed Rock of the Earth.

Granite is the lowest rock in the earth's crust. It is the bed rock of the world and shows no evidence of animal or vegetable life. It is the parent rock, from which all the rocks have been either directly or indirectly derived.

Increase of Election Districts.

The number of election districts this year is increased from 1,587 to 1,543.

DIED FOR ANOTHER.

UNPARALLELED SELF-SACRIFICE OF THREE SONS.

They Voluntarily Submitted to Be Devoured by a Pack of Hungry Wolves in Order to Save Their Old Father from a Similar Fate.

When Scaevola, in the days of ancient Rome, to show his contempt for a tyrant's power, thrust his right hand into a fire and held it there until it was consumed, he gave an example of sublime courage and daring which poets and orators have since immortalized. But the story is only a legend.

Infinitely greater than the legendary deed of Scaevola, because of the sacrifice, was the action of three young men in Russia, according to a story which has come from the far northern government of Archangel, along the borders of the White sea, who voluntarily faced death in its most awful form and knowingly embraced it that they might by the sacrifice of themselves save the father whom they each loved and revered. The names of these heroic young men are not revealed, but their devotion is worthy a place at the head of the highest deeds of self-sacrifice.

The young men and their father set out to make a journey by sleigh from Archangel to a village 150 miles distant along the shores of the White sea.



UNPARALLELED SELF-SACRIFICE.

They had taken a supply of ammunition so as to be provided against an attack by wolves, with which the region is overrun. Unfortunately a storm so dampened the powder that it was useless, and before their stock could be renewed the dreadful wolves to the number of 200 appeared. Knowing that if they remained together they would all perish, the sons determined upon a desperate scheme through which it was hoped one or more of the party might escape. The scheme was for one of them to leave the conveyance and give fight to the wolves, thereby delaying the latter in their pursuit of the sleigh. When he fell, as undoubtedly he would, the wolves would stop to devour him, and probably to fight among themselves, for injured wolves, especially when stained with blood, are frequently eaten by their stronger comrades. The delay would give the occupants of the sleigh a possible chance of escape. But if the wolves again grew hot in the trail another of the brothers was to make a sacrifice of himself, and so on until the father remained.

To determine who would be the first victim the sons drew lots and the choice fell upon the youngest. Grasping his knife and with an affectionate adieu to his father and brothers, he waited until the leaders of the wolves were at the back of the sleigh and he could almost feel their hot breath as their red, hungry tongues shot out in rage and their baleful eyes shone in savage ferocity. And then with a committing prayer to Heaven he jumped to the ground, sheathing his knife in the first brute that reached him. Again and again the bloody knife was raised and as often found a fleshy scabbard until overpowered by numbers he was dragged to the ground and torn to pieces.

For the occupants of the sleigh, which was speeding along as fast as the powerful horses could draw it, it seemed but a few minutes before the cries of the wolves again filled their ears, and soon the leaders of the now thoroughly maddened pack were up to the sleigh. Lots were hastily drawn and the second son, knife in hand, jumped out and faced the infuriated beasts.

He did not die unavenged. For a little later, as the pack again took the trail and came in sight there was not over half a hundred of them.

As the leaders again came up to the sleigh the remaining son, after imploring his father to drive to the utmost, and if necessary to turn two of the horses back toward the pack and ride the other to some possible place of safety, jumped out of the conveyance and faced the animals with his knife.

Only imagination can picture that scene, for the third son perished as the other two. But the father was not again pursued by the wolves. The delay saved his life, and he reached a settlement in safety, to tell the horrible story of his escape and of the sublime deaths of his heroic children.

WEEDS THAT POISON MEN.

Animals Can Eat Them Without the Slightest Injurious Effect.

Out of weed study is certain to come remarkable information, for the poisonous plants are the most strangely constituted and given to astounding variations. For instance, the common poke berry presents a spectacle of contradictory qualities. Birds eat the berries, which to men are poisonous. Cattle may eat the leaves when green and fresh, but if perchance they should eat a wilted leaf it would poison them. The roots are deadly poison, yet the shoots which grow up six inches high in the spring are an excellent food for man—the rival of asparagus and equally healthful. Science has at last paused to inquire why this should be so, and some day the chemical action which can make a deadly poison by wilting a leaf when the fresh one is harmless will be discovered.

Similarly it has been observed of American false hellebore or itchweed that the seeds are poisonous to chickens, and that the leaves and roots are poisonous to men and horses, but that sheep and elk, which chew the cud, seem to relish the plant. In all the poison, when in the system, acts alike, paralyzing the heart and spinal cord. The poisonous element of corncockle has not yet been explained, but its curious action has already been observed. When extracted it mixes freely with water, froths like soap and, though odorless, will when inhaled produce violent sneezing. Caper spurge, the common gopher plant or spring wort, is curious in that the mere handling of it will poison to the extent of producing pimples and often gangrene. It is a thing that cattle can eat without harm, and goats eat freely, but the milk of the latter will then be deadly poison. In men a moderate dose will produce

the world to come, knock at your door and ask for a little in this one."

"Ah, yes, my friend, I do," sighed the archbishop. "I have felt and seen all that, but after all I find that the only way for the most of us to render life supportable is to work without reason."

DRAGGING FOR FLOUNDERERS.

How the Net Is Constructed and Handled.

The scheme of our fishermen was to scrape the bottom at a slow pace. The net was a good sixty feet in length, a sort of twine fence that rose to a height of thirty feet or so at the middle part and tapered to six or seven feet at the ends, which were each bound with a stout piece of wood and bridled on to the drag-lines that led to the sloops.

On these drag-lines were short wooden slats, of about the stoutness of fence railings, placed from six to eight feet apart. Twisting and twirling and ever moving forward, the slats were calculated to create a panic among any flounders that might be outlying and scare them toward the center of the line of advance.

The flounder is a slow swimmer, and it is a sedately moving arrangement, indeed, that does not overtake him. He is not only a slow fish, but also one of placid ways, and when overtaken by the advancing line of netting, it is his habit to seek a quiet spot. The quietest spots that he can find in a hurried

general collapse and death in a few hours. The poison of the sneeze weed flows mostly in the showy yellow flowers and is violent. The young plants are comparatively harmless and even in the mature ones the poison varies greatly—some having scarcely any at all.

In the case of this plant and the woolly and stemless loco weed some effort has been made to find out where they get their deadly poisons. That of the loco weed is a most subtle thing. The poison of the woolly loco produces strange hallucinations in its victims. It affects the eyesight and silently reaches one after another of the vital functions, killing the victim in two years time.

Some animals after eating it refuse every other kind of food and seek only this. They endure a lingering period of emaciation, characterized by sunken eyeballs, listless hair and feeble movements, and eventually die of starvation. So mystic an element gathered from the earth and the air naturally causes wonder and the desire to know what such things may be and why they are.—Ainslee's Magazine.

Basbful Elijah.

There Isabel—we Noah well—
Wood'd by a basbful feller,
For Theodora of this belle
Adored but dared not Ella.

At last one Eve upon the porch
In Ernest tones he pleaded,
He'd give up Paul to win her heart—
Her love was Saul he needed.

"I wish that Ida heart to give,"
Unto herself she Seth—
"If Phoebe Levi am a flirt
His Si will close in death."

He'd Caesar Randal little while
As Thus he was Abel—
From his big Guy a tender Luke
Beamed Dora tremes sable.

No sooner Adelaide his arm
About her waist so clever,
Than up she Rose Andrew away—
She wouldn't have it—never!

In vain did he for Mercy Sue—
This foolish swain Elijah.
"Oh, Hugo 'Ira hall," she jeered,
"I never could Abijah!"

He ne'er came Mary time again
And never after seen 'er—
And he's grown Grace since that sad day
While she's grown Evelina.
—Eugene Field.

Work Without Reasoning.

The death of Archbishop Corrigan is bringing forth many stories of his kindness, his charity and his broad view of living. The following is a story told illustrative of the latter point, says the New York Times:

Last winter he delivered a series of addresses on socialism, setting forth not only his views on that subject, but also his ideas of the art of living. One Sunday morning after one of these addresses he was approached by one of his auditors, who asked to speak with him a moment. The archbishop stopped to listen.

"It seems to me," began the person, "that you take quite a cheerful outlook upon life. The misery and misfortune of this world don't trouble you. Hiding yourself in religion, you don't see the masses of workmen who, tired of waiting for the happiness of

search are the inviting pockets that open out left and right on the net. These pockets were sufficiently wide and hospitable to enwrap a wine cask at the entrance, but at the inner end, so rapidly do they taper, it would take no infantile arm to wedge in a workman's dinner pail.

The crew of a flounder sloop are two in number; sometimes it is two grown men, sometimes a man and a well-grown boy. In this case, Charlie, the Minna's skipper, was a fair-headed fellow of 28 or 29, compact, muscular and active. The boy, August, 16 years of age, was a short and stocky boy, rather slow to grasp an idea, but a safe executive once he understood what it was that his captain ordered.

During this dragging operation, says James B. Connolly, in Scribner's, with the vessel sailing always across and sometimes almost into the wind, the crews take things comfortably. Everything was working nicely by 8 o'clock, and then our two skippers had an easy time of it to watch each other and sell their parallel courses; and, with dragging lines taut and with the net in the right place, with everything working properly, it became the boy's business to boil the coffee for breakfast.

Thorough Paced Economy.

A young man living on Walnut Hills is a close worker in money matters, that is, he stays close to the shore with his expenditures. He had the good luck to marry a girl whose parents are quite wealthy, and is at present living with his wife in one of his father-in-law's houses.

One day not long since, while discussing affairs with a friend, the latter asked:

"Did the old gentleman give you that house?"

"Well—no, not exactly," was the answer. "He offered it to me, but I wouldn't accept it."

"How's that?" asked the friend.

"Well," answered the man who had made the lucky matrimonial venture, "you see, the house really belongs to me. I'm living in it, rent free, and I'll get it when the old man dies. If I accept it now I'd have to pay the taxes." —Cincinnati Enquirer.

He Followed Directions.

Murphy being sick and alone in his cabin, Hogan volunteered to take care of him. The patient had been getting very little sleep, so the doctor left some powders and told Hogan to give Murphy one about bed time.

About 7 o'clock in the evening Hogan went out for a few minutes and when he returned Murphy was fast asleep. He slept soundly until 10 o'clock, when Hogan went to the bedside, shook the sleeping man vigorously and shouted:

"Wake up here, Moophy, till Oi give yez these powders 't m'ake ye sleep!"—Colorado Springs Gazette.

Too Cautious.

"I have the greatest confidence in Dr. Slocum as a physician," said one of the doctor's patients. "He never gives an opinion but he has waited and weighed a case and looked at it from every side." "Um-m!" said the skeptical friend. "That's all right if you don't carry it too far. There have been times, you know, when he's been so cautious that his diagnosis has come near getting mixed up with the coat-morose."