

# THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROY WATERS  
COPYRIGHT 1918 BY DOUGLAS FENELON CO.

## SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. The servants desert. Gertrude and Halsey arrive with Jack Bailey. The house was awakened by a revolver shot and Arnold Armstrong was found shot to death in the hall. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver on the lawn. He and Jack Bailey had disappeared. Gertrude revealed that she was engaged to Jack Bailey, with whom she talked in the billiard room shortly before the murder. Detective Jamieson accused Miss Innes of holding back evidence. He imprisoned an intruder in an empty room. The prisoner escaped. Gertrude was suspected because of an injured foot. Halsey responds and says he and Bailey were called away by a telegram. Cashier Bailey of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested for embezzlement. Paul Armstrong's death was announced. Halsey's fiancée, Louise Armstrong, told Halsey that while she still loved him, she was to marry another. It developed that Dr. Walker was the man. Louise was found at the bottom of the circular staircase. Recovering consciousness, she said something had brushed by her on the stairway and she fainted. Bailey is suspected of Armstrong's murder. A "Dead seeing a ghost," Thomas, the lodgekeeper, was found dead with a slip in his pocket bearing the name of "Louisa Wallace." Dr. Walker asked Miss Innes to vacate in favor of Mrs. Armstrong. She refused. A note from Bailey to Gertrude arranging a meeting at night was found. A hidden-out of place deepens the mystery. The stables were burned. During the excitement a man stole into the house. A search failed to reveal him. Miss Innes shot an intruder. A man limping was seen on the road. Halsey mysteriously disappeared. Louise's death was noted before his absence was noted.

## CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

"He's as dear to me as he is to you," she said sadly. "I tried to warn him."  
"Nonsense!" I said as briskly as I could. "We are making a lot of trouble out of something perhaps very small. Halsey was probably late—he is always late. Any moment we may hear the car coming up the road."

But it did not come. After a half-hour of suspense, Louise went out quietly, and did not come back. I hardly knew she was gone until I heard the station hack moving off. At 11 o'clock the telephone rang. It was Mr. Jamieson.

"I have found the Dragon Fly, Miss Innes," he said. "It has collided with a freight car on the siding above the station. No, Mr. Innes was not there, but we shall probably find him. Send Warner for the car."

But they did not find him. At four o'clock the next morning we were still waiting for news, while Alex watched the house and Sam the grounds. At daylight I dropped into exhausted sleep. Halsey had not come back, and there was no word from the detective.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### Halsey's Disappearance.

Mr. Jamieson came back about eight o'clock the next morning; he was covered with mud, and his hat was gone. Altogether we were a sad-looking trio that gathered around a breakfast that no one could eat. Over a cup of black coffee the detective told us what he had learned of Halsey's movements the night before. Up to a certain point the car had made it easy enough to follow him. And I gathered that Mr. Burns, the other detective, had followed a similar car for miles at dawn, only to find it was a touring car on an endurance run.

"He left here about ten minutes after eight," Mr. Jamieson said. "He went alone; at 8:20 he stopped at Dr. Walker's. I went to the doctor's about midnight, but he had been called out on a case, and had not come back at four o'clock. From the doctor's it seems Mr. Innes walked across the lawn to the cottage Mrs. Armstrong and her daughter have taken. Mrs. Armstrong had retired, and he said perhaps a dozen words to Miss Louise. She will not say what they were, but the girl evidently suspects what has occurred. That is, she suspects foul play, but she doesn't know of what nature. Then, apparently, he started directly for the station. Along somewhere in the dark stretch between Carol street and the depot he evidently swerved suddenly—perhaps some one in the road—and went full into the side of a freight. We found it there last night."

"He might have been thrown under the train by the force of the shock," I said tremulously.

Gertrude shuddered.

"We examined every inch of track. There was—no sign."

"But surely—he can't be—gone!" I cried. "Aren't there traces in the mud—anything?"

"There is no mud—only dust. There has been no rain. And the footpath there is of cinders. Miss Innes, I am inclined to think that he has met with bad treatment, in the light of what has gone before. I do not think he has been murdered." I shrank from the word. "Burns is back in the country on a clew we got from the night clerk at the drug store. There will be two more men here by noon, and the city office is on the lookout."

"The creek?" Gertrude asked.

"The creek is shallow now. If it were swollen with rain it would be different. There is hardly any water in it. Now, Miss Innes," he said, turning to me, "I must ask you some questions. Had Mr. Halsey any possible reason for going away like this, without warning?"

"None whatever."

"He went away once before," he



"Miss Armstrong is Very Ill and Unable to See Any One."

persisted. "And you were as sure then?"

"He did not leave the Dragon Fly jammed into the side of a freight car before."

"No, but he left it for repairs in a blacksmith shop, a long distance from here. Do you know if he had any enemies? Any one who might wish him out of the way?"

"Not that I know of, unless—no, I cannot think of any."

"Was he in the habit of carrying money?"

"He never carried it far. No, he never had more than enough for current expenses."

Mr. Jamieson got up then and began to pace the room. It was an unwonted concession to the occasion.

"Then I think we get at it by elimination. The chances are against flight. If he was hurt, we find no trace of him. It looks almost like an abduction. This young Dr. Walker—have you any idea why Mr. Innes should have gone there last night?"

"I cannot understand it," Gertrude said thoughtfully. "I don't think he knew Dr. Walker at all, and their relations could hardly have been cordial, under the circumstances."

Jamieson pricked up his ears, and little by little he drew from us the unfortunate story of Halsey's love affair, and the fact that Louise was going to marry Dr. Walker.

Mr. Jamieson listened attentively.

"There are some interesting developments here," he said thoughtfully. "The woman who claims to be the mother of Lucien Wallace has not come back. Your nephew has apparently been spirited away. There is an organized attempt being made to enter this house; in fact, it has been entered. Witness the incident with the cook yesterday. And I have a new piece of information." He looked carefully away from Gertrude. "Mr. John Bailey is not at his Kulekber apartment, and I don't know where he is. It's a hash, that's what it is. It's a Chinese puzzle. They won't fit together, unless—unless Mr. Bailey and your nephew have again—"

And once again Gertrude surprised me. "They are not together," she said hotly. "I know where Mr. Bailey is, and my brother is not with him."

"Miss Gertrude," he said, "if you and Miss Louise would only tell me everything you know and surmise about this business, I should be able to do a great many things. I believe I could find your brother, and I might be able to—well, to do some other things." But Gertrude's glance did not falter.

"Nothing that I know could help you to find Halsey," she said stubbornly. "I know absolutely as little of his disappearance as you do, and I can only say this: I do not trust Dr. Walker. I think he hated Halsey, and he would get rid of him if he could."

"Perhaps you are right. In fact, I had some such theory myself. But Dr. Walker went out late last night to a serious case in Summitville, and is still there. Burns traced him there. We have made guarded inquiry at the Greenwood club and through the village. There is absolutely nothing to go on but this: On the embankment above the railroad, at the point where we found the machine, is a small house. An old woman and a daughter, who is very lame, live there. They say that they distinctly heard the shock when the Dragon Fly hit the car, and they went to the bottom of their garden and looked over. The automobile was there; they could see the lights, and they thought some one had been injured. It was very dark,

but they could make out two figures, standing together. The women were curious, and, leaving the fence, they went back and by a roundabout path down to the road. When they got there the car was still standing, the headlights broken and the bonnet crushed, but there was no one to be seen."

The detective went away immediately, and to Gertrude and me was left the woman's part, to watch and wait. By luncheon nothing had been found, and I was frantic. I went upstairs to Halsey's room finally, from sheer inability to sit across from Gertrude any longer and meet her terrified eyes.

Liddy was in my dressing room, suspiciously red-eyed and trying to put a right sleeve in a left arm-hole of a new waist for me. I was too much shaken to scold.

"What name did that woman in the kitchen give?" she demanded, viciously ripping out the offending sleeve.

"Bliss, Mattie Bliss," I replied.

"Bliss, M. B. Well, that's not what she has on her suitcase. It is marked N. F. C."

The new cook and her initials troubled me not all. I put on my bonnet and sent for what the Casanova liverman called a "stylish turnout." Having once made up my mind to a course of action, I am not one to turn back. Warner drove me; he was plainly disgusted, and he steered the livery horse as he would the Dragon Fly, feeling uneasily with his left foot for the clutch, and working his right elbow at an imaginary horn every time a dog got in the way.

Warner had something on his mind, and after we had turned into the road he voiced it.

"Miss Innes," he said. "I overheard a part of a conversation yesterday that I didn't understand. It wasn't my business to understand it, for that matter. But I've been thinking all day that I'd better tell you. Yesterday afternoon, while you and Miss Gertrude were out driving, I had got the car in some sort of shape again after the fire, and I went to the library to call Mr. Innes to see it. I went into the living room, where Miss Liddy said he was, and half-way across the library I heard him talking to some one. He seemed to be walking up and down, and he was in a rage. I can tell you."

"What did he say?"

"The first thing I heard was—excuse me, Miss Innes, but it's what he said. 'The damned rascal,' he said, 'I'll see him in—well, in hell was what he said, 'in hell first.' Then somebody else spoke up; it was a woman. She said: 'I warned them, but they thought I would be afraid.'"

"A woman! Did you wait to see who it was?"

"I wasn't spying, Miss Innes," Warner said with dignity. "But the next thing caught my attention. She said: 'I knew there was something wrong from the start. A man isn't well one day, and dead the next, without some reason.' I thought she was speaking of Thomas."

"And you don't know who it was?" I exclaimed. "Warner, you had the key to this whole occurrence in your hands and did not see it!"

However, there was nothing to be done. I resolved to make inquiry when I got home, and in the meantime, my present errand absorbed me. This was nothing less than to see Louise Armstrong, and to attempt to drag from her what she knew, or suspected of Halsey's disappearance. But here, as in every direction I turned, I was baffled.

A neat maid answered the bell, but



she stood squarely in the doorway, and it was impossible to preserve one's dignity and pass her.

"Miss Armstrong is very ill and unable to see any one," she said. I did not believe her.

"And Mrs. Armstrong—is she also ill?"

"She is with Miss Louise and cannot be disturbed."

"Tell her it is Miss Innes, and that it is a matter of the greatest importance."

"It would be of no use, Miss Innes, my orders are positive."

At that moment a heavy step sounded on the stairs. Past the maid's white-shouldered I could see a familiar thatch of gray hair, and in a moment I was face to face with Dr. Stewart. He was very grave, and his customary geniality was tinged with restraint.

"You are the very woman I want to see," he said promptly. "Send away your trap, and let me drive you home. What is this about your nephew?"

"He has disappeared, doctor. Not only that, but there is every evidence that he has been either abducted or—"

"I could not finish. The doctor helped me into his capacious buggy in silence. Until we had got a little distance he did not speak; then he turned and looked at me.

"Now tell me all about it," he said. He heard me through without speaking.

"And you think Louise knows something?" he said when I had finished. "I don't—in fact, I am sure of it. The best evidence of it is this: She asked me if he had been heard from, or if anything had been learned. She won't allow Walker in the room, and she made me promise to see you and tell you this: don't give up the search for him. Find him, and find him soon. He is living."

"Well," I said, "if she knows that, she knows more. She is a very cruel and ungrateful girl."

"She is a very sleek girl," he said gravely. "Neither you nor I can judge her until we know everything. Both she and her mother are ghosts of their former selves. Under all this, these two sudden deaths, this bank robbery, the invasions at Sunnyside and Halsey's disappearance, there is some mystery that, mark my words, will come out some day. And when it does, we shall find Louise Armstrong a victim."

Then we drove slowly home. I had the doctor put me down at the gate, and I walked to the house—past the lodge where we had found Louise, and, later, poor Thomas, on the drive where I had seen a man watching the lodge and where, later, Rosie had been frightened; past the east entrance, where so short a time before the most obstinate effort had been made to enter the house, and where, that night two weeks ago, Liddy and I had seen the strange woman. Not far from the west wing lay the blackened ruins of the stables. I felt like a ruin myself as I paused on the broad veranda before I entered the house.

Two private detectives had arrived in my absence, and it was a relief to turn over to them the responsibility

of the house and grounds. Mr. Jamieson, they said, had arranged for more to assist in the search for the missing man, and at that time the country was being scoured in all directions.

The household staff was again depleted that afternoon. Liddy was waiting to tell me that the new cook had gone, bag and baggage, without waiting to be paid. No one had admitted the visitor whom Warner had heard in the library, unless, possibly, the missing cook. Again I was working in a circle.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

His Little Joke.

"I'm sorry, old man," said the doctor when his patient came out of the chloroform, "but we had to remove your leg to save your life."

"Will I get better?" asked the man feebly.

"Yes, you're all right now. You ought to live 20 years more."

"Ah," sighed the victim, "that's a long while to live with one foot in the grave."

Gertrude.

of the house and grounds. Mr. Jamieson, they said, had arranged for more to assist in the search for the missing man, and at that time the country was being scoured in all directions.

The household staff was again depleted that afternoon. Liddy was waiting to tell me that the new cook had gone, bag and baggage, without waiting to be paid. No one had admitted the visitor whom Warner had heard in the library, unless, possibly, the missing cook. Again I was working in a circle.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

His Little Joke.

"I'm sorry, old man," said the doctor when his patient came out of the chloroform, "but we had to remove your leg to save your life."

"Will I get better?" asked the man feebly.

"Yes, you're all right now. You ought to live 20 years more."

"Ah," sighed the victim, "that's a long while to live with one foot in the grave."

IN THE SAME BOAT.



Jones—After preparing a long speech for the dinner the other night, I couldn't remember a word of it.

Jaggshy—I couldn't remember any of mine the morning after.

FOR THE SKIN AND SCALP

Because of its delicate, emollient, sanative, antiseptic properties derived from Cuticura Ointment, united with the purest of cleansing ingredients and most refreshing of flower odors, Cuticura Soap is unrivaled for preserving, purifying and beautifying the skin, scalp, hair and hands, and, assisted by Cuticura Ointment, for dispelling itching irritation and inflammation and preventing clogging of the pores, the cause of many disfiguring facial eruptions. All who delight in a clear skin, soft, white hands, a clean, wholesome scalp and live, glossy hair, will find that Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment realize every expectation. Cuticura Remedies are sold throughout the world. Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., sole proprietors, Boston, Mass. Send them for the latest Cuticura Book, an authority on the best care of the skin, scalp, hair and hands. It is mailed free on request.

It Would Seem So.

"Say, pa?"  
"What is it?"  
"Does Uncle Sam ever lose his collar button under the weather bureau?"

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup.

A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.—Shakespeare.

LEWIS' "SINGLE BINDER."

A hand-made cigar fresh from the table, wrapped in foil, thus keeping fresh until smoked. A fresh cigar made of good tobacco is the ideal smoke. The old, well cured tobaccos used are so rich in quality that many who formerly smoked 10c cigars now smoke Lewis' Single Binder Straight 6c. Lewis' Single Binder costs the dealer some more than other 5c cigars, but the higher price enables this factory to use extra quality tobacco. There are many imitations; don't be fooled. There is no substitute! Tell the dealer you want a Lewis' "Single Binder."

Cruel.  
Mrs. Benham—Every time I sing to the baby he cries.

Benham—He gets his ability as a musical critic from my side of the house.

ASSIST YOUR WEAK STOMACH

Oftentimes the stomach needs some assistance in its great work of digestion and assimilation and an occasional dose of Hostetter's Stomach Bitters will give that assistance better than anything else you might take. Its merit has been proven thousands of times in cases of Poor Appetite, Headache, Indigestion, Dyspepsia, Costiveness and Malarial Disorders. Be persuaded to try a bottle today. Refuse substitutes.

STOCKERS & FEEDERS

Choice quality; reds and roans, white faces or Angus bought on orders. Tens of Thousands to select from. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Correspondence Invited. Come and see for yourself.

National Live Stock Com. Co.  
At either  
Kansas City, Mo. St. Joseph, Mo. Omaha, Neb.

# Attention Sick Women

If you had positive proof that a certain remedy for female ills had made many remarkable cures, would you not feel like trying it?

If during the last thirty years we have not succeeded in convincing every fair-minded woman that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has cured thousands and thousands of women of the ills peculiar to their sex, then we long for an opportunity to do so by direct correspondence. Meanwhile read the following letters which we guarantee to be genuine and truthful.

Hudson, Ohio.—"I suffered for a long time from a weakness, inflammation, dreadful pains each month and suppression. I had been doctoring and receiving only temporary relief, when a friend advised me to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. I did so, and wrote to you for advice. I have faithfully followed your directions and now, after taking only five bottles of the Vegetable Compound, I have every reason to believe I am a well woman. I give you full permission to use my testimonial."

—Mrs. Lena Carmocino, Hudson, Ohio. R. F. D. No. 7.

St. Regis Falls, N. Y.—"Two years ago I was so bad that I had to take to my bed every month, and it would last from two to three weeks. I wrote to you for advice and took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound in dry form. I am happy to say that I am cured, thanks to your medicine and good advice. You may use my letter for the good of others." —Mrs. J. H. Breyer, St. Regis Falls, N. Y.

There is absolutely no doubt about the ability of this grand old remedy, made from the roots and herbs of our fields, to cure female diseases. We possess volumes of proof of this fact, enough to convince the most skeptical.

For 30 years Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has been the standard remedy for female ills. No sick woman does justice to herself who will not try this famous medicine. Made exclusively from roots and herbs, and has thousands of cures to its credit.

Mrs. Pinkham invites all sick women to write her for advice. She has guided thousands to health free of charge. Address Mrs. Pinkham, Lynn, Mass.

MICA AXLE GREASE

Keeps the spindle bright and free from grit. Try a box. Sold by dealers everywhere.

STANDARD OIL CO. (Incorporated)

For DISTEMPER

Pink Eye, Epizootic Shipping Fever & Catarrhal Fever  
SPOHN MEDICAL CO., Chemists and GOSHEN, IND., U. S. A.