

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
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SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, upstair and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established a room headquarters at Sunnyside. Around Armstrong was found shot to death in the hall. Gertrude and her fiancé, Jack Bailey, had been in the billiard room shortly before the murder. Detective Jamieson accused Miss Innes of holding back evidence. Cashier Bailey of First National bank, however, 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 unconscious at the bottom of the circular staircase. She said something had brushed by her in the dark on the stairway and she fainted. Halsey is suspected of Armstrong's murder. Thomas, the lodgekeeper's murderer, was found with a note in his pocket bearing the name "Lucien Wallace." A ladder found out of place deep in the mystery. The stables were burned, and in the dark Miss Innes shot an intruder. Halsey mysteriously disappeared. His auto was found wrecked by a freight train. It developed Halsey had an argument in the library with a woman before his disappearance. News soon appears. Miss Innes learned Halsey was alive.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Who is Nina Carrington?
The four days, from Saturday to the following Tuesday, we lived, or existed, in a state of the most dreadful suspense. We ate only when Liddy brought in a tray, and then very little. The papers, of course, had got hold of the story, and we were besieged by newspaper men. From all over the country false clues came pouring in and raised hopes that crumbled again nothing. Every morgue within 100 miles, every hospital, had been visited, without result.

The inaction was deadly. Liddy cried all day, and because she knew I objected to tears, sniffled audibly around the corner.

"For heaven's sake, smile!" I snapped at her. And her ghastly attempt at a grin, with her swollen nose and red eyes, made me hysterical. I laughed and cried together, and pretty soon, like the two old fools we were, we were sitting together weeping into the same handkerchief.

On Tuesday, then, I sent for the car and prepared to go out. As I waited at the porte-cochere I saw the undergardener, an inoffensive, gray-haired man, trimming borders near the house. The day detective was watching him, sitting on the carriage block. When he saw me, he got up.

"Miss Innes," he said, taking off his hat, "do you know where Alex, the gardener, is?"

"Why, no. Isn't he here?" I asked. "He has been gone since yesterday afternoon. Have you—employed him long?"

"Only a couple of weeks."

"Is he efficient? A capable man?"

"I hardly know," I said vaguely. "The place looks all right, and I know very little about such things. I know much more about boxes of roses than bushes of them."

"This man," pointing to the assistant, "says Alex isn't a gardener. That he doesn't know anything about plants."

"That's very strange," I said, thinking hard. "Why, he came to me from the Brays, who are in Europe."

"Exactly." The detective smiled. "Every man who cuts grass isn't a gardener, Miss Innes, and just now it is our policy to believe every person around here a rascal until he proves to be the other thing."

Warner came up with the car then, and the conversation stopped. As he helped me in, however, the detective said something further.

"Not a word or sign to Alex, if he comes back," he said cautiously.

I went first to Dr. Walker's. I was tired of beating about the bush, and I felt that the key to Halsey's disappearance was here at Casanova, in spite of Mr. Jamieson's theories.

The doctor was in. He came at once to the door of his consulting room, and there was no mask of cordiality in his manner.

"Please come in," he said curtly.

"I shall stay here, I think, doctor. I did not like his face or his manner; there was a subtle change in both. He had thrown off the air of friendliness, and I thought, too, that he looked anxious and haggard."

"Dr. Walker," I said, "I have come to you to ask some questions. I hope you will answer them. As you know, my nephew has not yet been found."

"So I understand," stily.

"I believe, if you would, you could help us, and that leads to one of my questions. Will you tell me what was the nature of the conversation you held with him the night he was attacked and carried off?"

"Attacked! Carried off!" he said, with pretended surprise. "Really, Miss Innes, don't you think you exaggerate? I understand it is not the first time Mr. Innes has—disappeared."

"You are quibbling, doctor. This is a matter of life and death. Will you answer my question?"

"Certainly. He said his nerves were bad, and I gave him a prescription for them. I am violating professional ethics when I tell you even as much as that."

I could not tell him he lied. I think I looked it. But I hazarded a random shot.

"I thought perhaps," I said, watching him narrowly, "that it might be about—Nina Carrington."

For a moment I thought he was go-

ing to strike me. He grew livid, and a small crooked blood-vessel in his temple swelled and throbbled curiously. Then he forced a short laugh.

"Who is Nina Carrington?" he asked. "I am about to discover that," I replied, and he was quiet at once. It was not difficult to divine that he feared Nina Carrington a good deal more than he did the devil. Our leaving was brief; in fact, we merely stared at each other over the waiting room table, with its litter of year-old magazines. Then I turned and went out.

"To Richfield," I told Warner, and on the way I thought, and thought hard.

"Nina Carrington, Nina Carrington," the roar and rush of the wheels seemed to sing the words. "Nina Carrington, N. C." And I then knew, knew as surely as if I had seen the whole thing. There had been an N. C. on the suit case belonging to the woman with the pitted face. How simple it all seemed. Mattie Bliss had been Nina Carrington. It was she Warner had heard in the library. It was something she had told Halsey that had taken him frantically to Dr. Walker's office, and from there perhaps to his death. If we could find the woman, we might find what had become of Halsey.

We were almost at Richfield now, so I kept on. My mind was not on my errand there now. It was back with Halsey on that memorable night. What was it he had said to Louise, that had sent her up to Sunnyside, half wild with fear for him? I made up my mind, as the car drew up before the Tate cottage, that I would see Louise if I had to break into the house at night.

Almost exactly the same scene as before greeted my eyes at the cottage. Mrs. Tate, the baby-carriage in the path, the children at the swing—all were the same.

She came forward to meet me, and I noticed that some of the anxious lines had gone out of her face. She looked young, almost pretty.

"I am glad you have come back," she said. "I think I will have to be honest and give you back your money."

"Why?" I asked. "Has the mother come?"

"No, but some one came and paid the boy's board for a month. She talked to him for a long time, but when I asked him afterward he didn't know her name."

"A young woman?"

"Not very young. About 40, I suppose. She was small and fair-haired, just a little bit gray, and very sad. She was in deep mourning, and, I think, when she came, she expected to go at once. But the child, Lucien, interested her. She talked to him for a long time, and, indeed, she looked much happier when she left."

"You are sure this was not the real mother?"

"O mercy, no! Why, she didn't know which of the three was Lucien. I thought perhaps she was a friend of yours, but, of course, I didn't ask."

"She was not—pock-marked?" I asked at a venture.

"No, indeed. A skin like a baby's. But perhaps you will know the initials. She gave Lucien a handkerchief and forgot it. It was very fine, black-bordered, and it had three hand-worked letters in the corner—F. B. A."

"No," I said with truth enough, "she is not a friend of mine." F. B. A. was Fanny Armstrong, without a chance of doubt.

With another warning to Mrs. Tate as to silence, we started back to Sun-

nyside. So Fanny Armstrong knew of Lucien Wallace, and was sufficiently interested to visit him and pay for his support. Who was the child's mother and where was she? Who was Nina Carrington? Did either of them know where Halsey was, or what had happened to him?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Tramp and the Toothache.
The bitterness toward the dead president of the Traders' bank seemed to grow with time. Never popular, his memory was execrated by people who had lost nothing, but who were filled with disgust by constantly hearing new stories of the man's grasping avarice.

But, like everything else those days, the bank failure was almost forgotten by Gertrude and myself. We did not mention Jack Bailey; I had found nothing to change my impression of his guilt, and Gertrude knew how I felt. As for the murder of the bank president's son, I was of two minds. One day I thought Gertrude knew or at least suspected that Jack had done it; the next I feared that it had been Gertrude herself, that night alone on the circular staircase. And then the mother of Lucien Wallace would oblige herself, and an almost equally good case might be made against her.

There were times, of course, when I was disposed to throw all those suspicions aside, and fix definitely on the unknown, whoever that might be.

I had my greatest disappointment when it came to tracing Nina Carrington. The woman had gone without leaving a trace. Marked as she was, it should have been easy to follow her, but she was not to be found. A description to one of the detectives, on my arrival at home, had started the ball rolling. But by night she had not been found. I told Gertrude, then, about the telegram to Louise when she had been ill before; about my visit to Dr. Walker, and my suspicions that Mattie Bliss and Nina Carrington were the same. She thought, as I did, that there was little doubt of it.

I said nothing to her, however, of the detective's suspicions about Alex. Little things that I had not noticed at the time now came back to me. I had an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps Alex was a spy, and that by taking him into the house I had played into the enemy's hands. But at eight o'clock that night Alex himself appeared, and with him a strange and repulsive individual. They made a queer pair, for Alex was almost as disreputable as the tramp, and he had a badly swollen eye.

Gertrude had been sitting listlessly waiting for the evening message from Mr. Jamieson, but when the singular pair came in, as they did, without ceremony, she jumped up and stood staring. Winters, the detective who watched the house at night, followed them, and kept his eyes sharply on Alex's prisoner. For that was the situation as it developed.

He was a tall lanky individual, ragged and dirty, and just now he looked both terrified and embarrassed. Alex was too much engrossed to be either, and to this day I don't think I ever asked him why he went off without permission the day before.

"Miss Innes," Alex began abruptly, "this man can tell us something very important about the disappearance of Mr. Innes. I found him trying to sell this watch."

He took a watch from his pocket and put it on the table. It was Halsey's watch. I had given it to him on the



twenty-first birthday; I was dumb with apprehension.

"He says he had a pair of cuff-links also, but he sold them—"

"For a dollar's half," put in the disreputable individual hoarsely, with an eye on the detective.

"He is not—dead?" I implored. The tramp cleared his throat.

"No'm," he said huskily. "He was used up pretty bad, but we weren't dead. He was comin' to himself when I—"

"I didn't steal it, Mr. Winters," he whined. "I found it in the road, honest to God, I did."

Mr. Winters paid no attention to him. He was watching Alex.

"I'd better tell what he told me," Alex broke in. "It will be quicker. When Jamieson—when Mr. Jamieson calls up we can start him right. Mr. Winters, I found this man trying to sell that watch on Fifth street. He offered it to me for \$3."

"How did you know the watch?" Winters snapped at him.

"I had seen it before, many times. I used it at night when I was watching at the foot of the staircase." The detective was satisfied. "When he offered the watch to me, I knew it, and I pretended I was going to buy it. We went into an alley and I got the watch." The tramp shivered. It was plain how Alex had secured the watch.

"Then—I got the story from this fellow. He claims to have seen the Montana Ore Purchasing company. At this period was formed the great Amalgamated Copper company, with a capitalization of \$75,000,000, since increased to \$155,000,000. In a labor dispute which the trust forced upon its employees, seeking to reduce wages and rearrange the hours of labor, Heinze stood by the workers, paying those in his employ the usual wage rate, and thus came under the displeasure of the trust. For years the Amalgamated sought to force him into the trust or drive him out of the state and the battle between Heinze on the one hand and the trust on the other was carried in numerous suits through every court in the state and to the supreme court of the nation. And Heinze won at every turn.

Upon the issues at stake in these suits men were elected to the legislature, judges were appointed to the bench and newspapers were bought or subsidized. Political issues were lost sight of and men almost forgot that they were Democrats or Republicans, being classified instead as adherents of the Amalgamated company or of the Heinze interests.

Heinze is a strong man mentally and physically. On his father's side the family is traced back through a

work in the copper mines. After two years' service he came into a fortune of \$50,000, went to Germany, where he studied engineering and metallurgy and returning to Montana organized the Montana Ore Purchasing company. At this period was formed the great Amalgamated Copper company, with a capitalization of \$75,000,000, since increased to \$155,000,000. In a labor dispute which the trust forced upon its employees, seeking to reduce wages and rearrange the hours of labor, Heinze stood by the workers, paying those in his employ the usual wage rate, and thus came under the displeasure of the trust. For years the Amalgamated sought to force him into the trust or drive him out of the state and the battle between Heinze on the one hand and the trust on the other was carried in numerous suits through every court in the state and to the supreme court of the nation. And Heinze won at every turn.

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HEINZE MARRIES AN ACTRESS

Montana's Young Copper King, Who Worsted the Trust, Weds Bernice Golden Henderson.

Butte, Mont.—The marriage of F. Augustus Heinze to Miss Bernice Golden Henderson, which recently took place, was of considerable public interest, not so much on account of the bride, who is young, beautiful and an actress, as because of the remarkable personality of this young "copper king" of Montana, who single-handed and almost alone brought the most powerful trust in the world to its knees.

Heinze, who is a native of Brooklyn, where he was born in 1867, came to Butte in 1889 as a surveyor and found



F. Augustus Heinze.

work in the copper mines. After two years' service he came into a fortune of \$50,000, went to Germany, where he studied engineering and metallurgy and returning to Montana organized the Montana Ore Purchasing company. At this period was formed the great Amalgamated Copper company, with a capitalization of \$75,000,000, since increased to \$155,000,000. In a labor dispute which the trust forced upon its employees, seeking to reduce wages and rearrange the hours of labor, Heinze stood by the workers, paying those in his employ the usual wage rate, and thus came under the displeasure of the trust. For years the Amalgamated sought to force him into the trust or drive him out of the state and the battle between Heinze on the one hand and the trust on the other was carried in numerous suits through every court in the state and to the supreme court of the nation. And Heinze won at every turn.

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Mrs. Henderson-Heinze.

long line of Lutheran ministers for over three centuries, and on the mother's side it goes back in this country to the first governor of Connecticut.

His bride is a well-known actress, who won success on the stage as the Vampire in "A Fool There Was," succeeding Kathryn Kaelred in this role. Although still in the early 20s, Miss Henderson has already been married and divorced, and it was to support a two-year-old daughter that she embarked, on the advice of David Belasco, on a stage career last season.

About Women Smoking.

Washington.—Just now there is a crusade against the smoking of cigarettes by women. The fact that society women have taken up this solace is considered an evidence that our present social course is leading the way to decay. Yet the only thing that is new about the smoking of cigarettes by women is the protest against it.

Andrew Jackson's mother used to smoke a corncob pipe. Probably Abraham Lincoln's mother did, too. Certainly most of the ladies who came over in the steerage—and the daughters of many of them are now found in our most exclusive circles—were rarely without their old pipes, some clay, some corncob.

No protest was made against the smoking of a pipe by Andrew Jackson's mother and we have never heard of any meetings of protest in Mrs. Lincoln's neighborhood. Incidentally, each of these women reared a son who made his mark in the world.

MUNYON'S RHEUMATISM

Has cured thousands
CURE
and it can cure you.
Relieves from the first.
All Druggists, 25¢

The Explanation.
Old Podkins lay back in his chair in calm content, and though his wife was quite near him he was happy, for she had not broken the silence for nearly five minutes.

He had been married for five-and-twenty long years, and Mrs. Podkins, almost daily during 24 of them, had disturbed the domestic peace by a too full exercise of her tongue.

"My dear," broke in Mrs. P.—"thinking it time she said something to interrupt the quiet, "I see by the papers that a petrified jaw two yards long has been found in Cornwall."

"What!" cried Podkins, starting up. "Now I know your secret. But you never told me your ancestors came from that part of the world!"

NO HEALTHY SKIN LEFT

"My little son, a boy of five, broke out with an itching rash. Three doctors prescribed for him, but he kept getting worse until we could not dress him any more. They finally advised me to try a certain medical college, but its treatment did no good. At the time I was induced to try Cuticura he was so bad that I had to cut his hair off and put the Cuticura Ointment on him on bandages, as it was impossible to touch him with the bare hand. There was not one square inch of skin on his whole body that was not affected. He was one mass of sores. The bandages used to stick to his skin and in removing them it used to take the skin off with them, and the screams from the poor child were heart-breaking. I began to think that he would never get well, but after the second application of Cuticura Ointment I began to see signs of improvement, and with the third and fourth applications the sores commenced to dry up. His skin peeled off twenty times, but it finally yielded to the treatment. Now I can say that he is entirely cured, and a stronger and healthier boy you never saw than he is to-day, twelve years or more since the cure was effected. Robert Wattam, 1148 Forty-eighth St., Chicago, Ill., Oct. 9, 1909."

The Part of it.
"I wonder if that sour Miss Oldgirl ever had any salad days?"
"I am sure she had the vinegar and peppery part of them."

TRY MURINE EYE REMEDY

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Druggists Sell Murine Eye Remedy, Liquid, 25c, 50c, \$1.00
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EYE BOOKS AND ADVICE FREE BY MAIL
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Constipation Vanishes Forever

Prompt Relief—Permanent Cure
CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS never fail. Purely vegetable—act surely but gently on the liver.
Stop after dinner—distress—cure indigestion—improve the complexion—brighten the eyes. Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.
Genuine must bear Signature
Beathood

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.

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PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM

Cleanses and beautifies the hair. Promotes a luxuriant growth. Never Fails to Restore Gray Hair to its Youthful Color. Cures scalp diseases & hair falling. 25c and \$1.00 at Druggists.