# THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

ROBERTS RINEHART IL I USTRATIONS BY ROYWATERS

SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Amidst numerous difficulties the servants deserted, As Miss Innes bocked up for the night she was startled by a dark figure on the veranda. Uniscently noises disturbed her during the night. In the morning Miss Innes found a strange link cuff-button in a hamper. Gertrude and Halsey arrived with Jack Eailey. The house was awakened by a revolver shot and Arneld Armstrong was found shet to death in the halt. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver on the lawn. He and Jack Balley had disappeared. The link cuff-button mysteriously disappeared. Detective Jamieson arrived. Gertrude revealed size was ongaged to Jack Italey, with whom she talked in the billiard room a few moments before the murder. Jamieson accused Miss Innes of holding burk evidence. He imprisoned an intruder in an empty room. The prisoner escaped down a laundry chute. Gertrude was suspected. A negro found the other half of what proved to be Jack Eailey's cuff-button. Halsey reappears and says he and Balley left in response to a telegram. Gertrude Baid she had given Balley an unloaded revolver, fenting to give him a loaded weapon. Cashier Balley of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested for embezzlement. Halsey said Armstrong bank, defunct, was arrested for embezzlement. Halsey said Armstrong wereked his own bank and could clear Balley. Paul Armstrong's death was announced. Halsey's finance, Louise Armstrong, was found at the lodge. The lodgekeeper said Louise and Arnold had a long talk the night of the murder, Louise were to be married. A prowler was heard in the heuse. Louise was found at the bottom of the circular staircase. Louise were to be married. A prowler was heard in the heuse, Louise was found at the bottom of the circular staircase. Louise were to be married. A prowler was heard in the heuse. Louise was found at the bottom of the circular staircase. Louise were to be married. A prowler was heard in the house. Louise was found at the botto

#### CHAPTER XIX .- Continued.

"Why was Mr. Bailey not present at the inquest?"

The detective's expression was pe culiar.

"Because his physician testified that he is ill, and unable to leave his bed."

"Ill!" I exclaimed. "Why, neither Halsey nor Gertrude has told me that."

"There are more things than that, Miss Innes, that are puzzling. Bailey gives the impression that he knew nothing of the crash at the bank until he read it in the paper Monday night, and that he went back and surrendered himself immediately. I do not believe it. Jonas, the watchman at the Traders' bank, tells a different story. He says that on the Thursday night before, about 8:30, Bailey went back to the bank. Jonas admitted him, and he says the cashier and Mr. Jamieson was examining the was in a state almost of collapse. Bailey worked until midnight, then he into a chair in the living room and closed the vault and went away. The stared moodily ahead. Once he roused. occurrence was so unusual that the watchman pondered over it all the Walker, Gertrude?" he asked. rest of the night. What did Bailey do when he went back to the Knickerdeparture. But he held off too long; kicked a taboret viciously. he waited for something. My personal opinion is that he waited to see Miss Gertrude before flying from the country. Then, when he had shot surrendered himself, as an innocent half abashed. man. The strongest thing against him is his preparation for flight, and "But I didn't know what else to do. his deciding to come back after the It's about Thomas." murder of Arnold Armstrong. He was to the graver charge."

The evening dragged along slowly. Mrs. Watson came to my bedroom be- plained. "He's sitting down there on fore I went to bed and asked if I had the edge of the porch, and he says he any arnica. She showed me a badly has seen a ghost. The old man looks swollen hand, with reddish streaks bad, too; he can scarcely speak." running toward the elbow; she said it was the hand she had hurt the night of the murder a week before, and that she had not slept well since. It looked down." to me as if it might be serious, and I told her to let Dr. Stewart see it.

The next morning Mrs. Watson went up to town on the 11 train and was admitted to the Charity hospital. She was suffering from blood-poisoning. I fully meant to go up and see her there, but other things drove her entirely from my mind. I telephoned to the hospital that day, however, and ordered a private room for her, and whatever comforts she might be allowed.

Mrs. Armstrong arrived Monday evening with her husband's body, and the services were set for the next day. The house on Chestnut street, the round of the lodge, occasionally in town, had been opened, and Tues- calling the old man by name. But day morning Louise left us to go there was no response. No Thomas home. She sent for me before she

she said. "You have taken me on time. Gertrude, who was never nervfaith, and-you have not asked me ous in the dark, went alone down the any questions. Some time, perhaps, I drive to the gate, and stood there, can tell you; and when that time looking along the yellowish line of the comes, you will all despise me-Hal- road, while I waited on the tiny ver-

sey, too." I tried to tell her how glad I was to have had her, but there was something else she wanted to say. She said it finally, when she had bade a to know and explain. constrained good-by to Halsey and the car was waiting at the door.

"Miss Innes," she said in a low tone, "if they-if there is any attempt | not inside or outside, that I can see." made to-to have you give up the house, do it, if you possibly can. I am afraid-to have you stay."

That was all. Gertrude went into home. She reported a decided coolness in the greeting between Louise had not gone far. and her mother, and that Dr. Walker



It Was Thomas.

was there, apparently in charge of the table my eyes traveled around the arrangements for the funeral. Halsey room, and stopped at the door of a disappeared shortly after Louise left closet. I hardly know what impulse and came home about nine that night, moved me, but I went in and turned muddy and tired. As for Thomas, he the knob. It burst open with the imwent around dejected and sad, and I petus of a weight behind it, and somely at dinner. Even now I wonder- on the floor. It was Thomas-Thomas what did Thomas know? What did he without a mark of injury on him, and suspect?

At ten o'clock the household had settled down for the night. Liddy, who was taking Mrs. Watson's place, had finished examining the tea-towels and the corners of the shelves in the cooling room, and had gone to bed. Alex, the gardener, had gone heavily up the circular staircase to his room, locks of the windows. Halsey dropped "What sort of a looking chap is that

"Rather tall, very dark, shaven. Not bad looking," Gertrude bocker apartments that night? He said, putting down the book she had packed a suit-case ready for instant been pretending to read. Halsey

"Lovely place this village must be in the winter," he said irrelevantly. "A girl would be buried alive here." It was then some one rapped at the down Arnold Armstrong that night, he knocker on the heavy front door, Halhad to choose between two evils. He sey got up leisurely and opened it, did the thing that would immediately admitting Warner. He was out of turn public opinion in his favor, and breath from running, and he looked

"I am sorry to disturb you," he said.

"What about Thomas?" I asked. shrewd enough to disarm suspicion as Mr. Jamieson had come into the hall and we all stared at Warner. "He's acting queer," Warner ex-

"He's as full of superstition as an egg is of meat," I said, "Halsey, bring some whisky and we will all go

No one moved to get the whisky, from which I judged there were three pocket flasks ready for emergency. Gertrude threw a shawl around my shoulders, and we all started down over the hill; I had made so many nocturnal excursions around the place that I knew my way perfectly. But Thomas was not on the veranda, nor was he inside the house. The men exchanged significant glances, and Warner got a lantern.

"He can't have gone far," he said. 'He was trembling so that he couldn't

stand when I left. Jamieson and Halsey together made came, bowing and showing his white went, and I saw she had been crying. teeth through the darkness. I began "How can I thank you, Miss Innes?" to be vaguely uneasy, for the first any possible effect it might have, but,

anda. Warner was puzzled. He came around to the edge of the veranda and stood looking at it as if it ought

"He might have stumbled into the house," he said, "but he could not have climbed the stairs. Anyhow, he's The other members of the party had come back now, and no one had not have had a key to that particular found any trace of the old man. His door, although the servants' entry pipe, still warm, rested on the edge town with her and saw her safely of the rail, and inside on the table his old gray hat showed that its owner a new field of conjecture. Just now,

He was not far, after all. From the be attended to, and, leaving Warner knives and forks."

saw the detective watching him close- thing fell partly forward in a heap dead.

### CHAPTER XX.

Dr. Walker's Warning. Warner was on his knees in a moment, fumbling at the old man's collar to loosen it, but Halsey caught his hand.

"Let him alone," he said. "You can't help him; he is dead."

We stood there, each avoiding the other's eyes; we spoke low and reverently in the presence of death, and we tacitly avoided any mention of the suspicion that was in every mind. When Mr. Jamieson had finished his cursory examination, he got up and dusted the knees of his trousers.

"There is no sign of injury," he said, and I know I, for one, drew a long breath of relief. "From what Warner says and from his hiding in the closet, I should say he was scared to death. Fright and weak heart, together."

"But what could have done it?" Gertrude asked. "He was all right this evening at dinner. Warner, what did he say when you found him on the porch ?"

Warner looked shaken; his honest, boyish face was colorless.

"Just what I told you, Miss Innes. He'd heen reading the paper downstairs; I had put up the car, and. feeling sleepy, I came down to the lodge to go to bed. As I went upstairs Thomas put down the paper and taking his pipe went out on the porch. Then I heard an exclamation from him."

"Didn't he say anything you could understand?" I asked.

"He said something about the grave giving up its dead."

Mr. Jamieson was going through the old man's pockets, and Gertrude was

composing his arms, folding them across his white shirt-bosom, always so spotless. In the course of his investigations

the detective had come to the inner pocket of the dead butler's black coat. Here he found some things that interested him. One was a small flat key, with a red cord tied to it, and the other was a bit of white paper, on which was written something in Thomas' cramped hand. Mr. Jamle son read it; then he gave it to me. It was an address in fresh ink:

LUCIEN WALLACE,

14 Elm Street, Richfield. As the card went around, I think both the detective and I watched for beyond perplexity, there seemed to be

"Richfield!" Gertrude exclaimed. Why, Elm street is the main street; don't you remember, Halsey?"

"Lucien Wallace!" Halsey said. That is the child Stewart spoke of at the inquest."

Warner, with his mechanic's instinct, had reached for the key. What he said was not a surprise. "Yale lock," he said. "Probably a

key to the east entry." There was no reason why Thomas, an old and trusted servant, should was in the west wing. But I had not known of this key, and it opened up however, there were many things to tion to the management of the various



with the body we all went back to the house Mr Jamieson walked with me, while Halsey and Gertrude fol-

"I suppose I shall have to notify the Armstrongs," I said. "They will know if Thomas had any people and how to reach them. Of course, I expect to defray the expenses of the funeral, but his relatives must be found. What do you think frightened him, Mr. Jamie-BOH 3

"It is hard to say," he replied slowly, but I think we may be certain it was fright, and that he was hiding from something. I am sorry in more than one way; I have always believed that Thomas knew something, or suspected something, that he would not tell. Do you know how much money there was in that wormout wallet of his? Nearly \$100! Almost two months' wages-and yet those darkles seldom have a penny. Well-what Thomas knew will be buried with him."

With the death of Thomas, I felt that a climax had come in affairs at Sunnyside. The night that followed was quiet enough. Halsey watched at the foot of the staircase, and a complicated system of bolts on the other doors seemed to be effectual.

Once in the night I wakened and thought I heard the tapping again. But all was quiet, and I had reached the stage where I refused to be disturbed for minor occurrences.

The Armstrongs were notified of Thomas' death, and I had my first interview with Dr. Walker as a result. He came up early the next morning, just as we finished breakfast, in a professional looking car with a black hood

"I must make a double excuse for this early visit, Miss Innes," he said as he sat down. The chair was lower than he expected, and his dignity required collecting before he went on. 'My professional duties are urgent and long neglected, and"-a fall to the every-day manner-"something must be done about that body."

"Yes," I said, sitting on the edge of my chair. "I merely wished the address of Thomas' people. You might have telephoned, if you were busy."

He smiled.

"I wished to see you about something else," he said. "As for Thomas, it is Mrs. Armstrong's wish that you allow her to attend to the expense. About his relatives, I have already notified his brother, in the village. It was heart disease, I think. Thomas always had a bad heart."

"Heart disease and fright," I said, there in the last five months. still on the edge of my chair. But the doctor had no intention of leaving.

here, and that you have the house in his face and demanded his valufilled with detectives to exorcise it." he said.

'pumped," as Halsey says, "You have been misinformed," I replied.

What, no ghost, no detectives!" he said, still with his smile, "What a disappointment to the village!" I resented his attempt at playful-

ness. It had been anything but a joke to us.

"Dr. Walker," I said tartly, "I fail to see any humor in the situation. Since I came here, one man has been shot, and another one has died from shock. There have been intruders in the house, and strange noises. If that is funny, there is something wrong with my sense of humor."

"You miss the point," he said, still good naturedly. "The thing that is funny to me is that you insist on remaining here, under the circumstances. I should think nothing would

"You are mistaken. Everything that occurs only confirms my resolution to stay until the mystery is cleared."

"I have a message for you, Miss Innes," he said, rising at last. "Mrs. Armstrong asked me to thank you for your kindness to Louise, whose whim, occurring at the time it did, put her to great inconvenience. Also-and this is a delicate matter-she asked me to appeal to your natural sympathy for her, at this time, and to ask you if you will not reconsider your decision about the house. Sunnyside is her home; she loves it dearly, and him out of it just now she wishes to retire here for quiet and peace.'

heart," I said, ungraciously enough, "Louise told me her mother despised buggy and harness, all belonging to the place. Besides, this is no place Mike Suchan, the Howells liveryman. for quiet and peace just now. Any- He hired the team at the barn, sayhow, doctor, while I don't care to ing that he wished to make a drive force an issue, I shall certainly re- into the country. His failure to remain here, for a time at least." "For how long?" he asked.

"My lease is for six months. I shall stay until some explanation is found for certain things. My own family is implicated now, and I shall do everything to clear the mystery of Arnold Armtsrong's murder.

The doctor stood looking down, slapping his gloves thoughtfully against the palm of a well-looked-after hand. "You say there have been intruders in the house?" he asked. "You are sure of that, Miss Innes?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Why do you always eat a square meal before dining out?" "So that I can give my entire atten

One Thing at a Time.

NEBRASKA IN BRIEF.

News Notes of Interest From Various Sections.

A couple of cases of smallpox have

developed at Gordon. An effort is being made to oust th€ postmaster at Omaha for "pernicious

political activity." While swimming in the Platte river arl Thorson of Mead, became lodged

in a suck hole and was drowned. On August 31 and September 1 and Polk will celebrate the fourth an-

niversary of the founding of the town. Mrs. J. F. Elchert, wife of the Missouir Pacific agent at Stella, was severely shocked by a stroke of light-

A requisition was issued for the return of Ray Noel of Columbus to this state from Kansas. Noel is wanted for embezzlement.

The new rectory in St. Anthony's parish at St. Charles, a wealthy settlement of Germans five miles southwest

of West Point was dedicated Sunday. Much sickness of the nature of ty phoid has been in evidence about Sutherland for several weeeks, but only one or two deaths have resulted.

A Minnesota ditching company has been cutting ditches in the vicinity of Clarks, and as a result some rich hay bottoms will be profitably cultivated for grain crops.

Articles of incorporation were filed with the county clerk of Buffalo county for the firm of The Wright-Reasoner-Bliss Hardware company. The capital stock was fixed at \$20,000.

Copious rains during the last sev eral days have had the effect of sav ing considerable of the corn crop in the vicinity of Sunderland. Farmers figure that they will have some corn.

William McLeod, state fire inspector, was at Nebraska City and served a number of notices on property ownrs to clean up the inflammable material about their places and the removal or repair of some twenty buildings in bad shape.

The financial statement of the treasurer of the newly created West Point Speed association, just published, shows a gratifying state of affairs. In spite of the bad weather of the third and last race day, the balance in hand is \$842. A dividend of 25 per cent has been declared and paid to the subscribers.

The school board of Stromsburg has submitted bids for the new High school building, and they will be opened August 26, and the work will begin on the new building as soon as the contract is let.

Nearly \$50,000 has been paid into Fremont National banks by property owners, whose land has been assessed for benefits under the Elkhorn River Drainage district. All assessments must be paid by August 23. An elopement occurred at Stratton.

Fred Andrews and Olive Miles, daughter of W. F. Miles, a farmer living north of Stratton, slipped away to Benkleman and were married. This is the fourth occurrence of this kind

Ed Walters, while returning home near midnight, was met by an un "I understand you have a ghost up known man who thrust a revolver ables. Mr. Walters struck at him but missed and the fellow fired, the For some reason I felt I was being powder burning Walters' face and the bullet passed through his ear.

The Fremont Commercial club has decided to have three automobile excursions to neighboring towns instead of one, as at first proposed. One will take in the towns to the south and west. These excursions will take the place of the annual trip by special train which the club has been taking for several years.

C. K. Gittings, a director of the Cement company of Superior, has returned from a directors' meeting at which it was decided to authorize C. W. McLaughlin, the president, to at once begin work with the Burlington for track laying to the quarries and M. Spiesberger & Son Co. to commence work on the plant building September 1.

Several threshing machines have commenced work near Hartington and they report small grain a good average crop at all places where they have threshed so far.

Thomas Matthews volunteered to go on the bond of George Poell, excounty clerk of Hall county, charged with forgery, the bond being in the sum of \$1,000. Matthews was in the book business when Poell first was a candidate and was a big booster for him. He has since been out of the city, but declares that he helped Poell into office and trouble and now is willing to be of some ald in helping

Bohumil Fillipi, who has made his home for years in the vicinity of "She must have had a change of Leigh, has left for parts unknown, taking with him a team of horses. turn within a reasonable time aroused the suspicions of the liveryman, who inevstigated and found that the man had skipped the country with one of the best turnouts in the barn. While hauling a load of stone with

his brothers, Elden, young son of H. L. Watson of Eureka precinct, Furnas county, was thrown under the wagon and one wheel passed over his head breaking the lower jaw and severely bruising the boy's face. The injuries are very painful, but he will live.

Gabriel Krasny, an inmate of the county jail of Dodge county, made a break for freedom and when seized by Deputy Sheriff Condit made such a fight for his liberty that it required the efforts of four men to subdue him Krasny is an insane patient who was brought to the city from North Bend.

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Less Lavish.

"I saw 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' played recently." "So?

"I think I'll read the book." "You may be disappointed. The book mentions only one little Eva and one Lawyer Marks."-Louisville Cour-

ter Journal.

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