

# THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

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## SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Amidst numerous difficulties the servants deserted. As Miss Innes looked up for the night she was startled by a dark figure on the veranda. Unmistakably she described her during the night. In the morning Miss Innes found a strange link cut-button in a hamper. Gertrude and Halsey arrived 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. The link cut-button mysteriously disappeared. Detective Jamieson arrived. Gertrude revealed she was engaged to Jack Bailey, with whom she talked in the billiard room a few moments before the murder. Jamieson accused Miss Innes of holding back evidence. He imprisoned an intruder in an empty room. The prisoner was suspected. A laundry chute was suspected. A negro found the other half of what proved to be Jack Bailey's cut-button. Halsey resented and says he and Bailey left in response to a telegram. Gertrude said she had given Bailey an unloaded revolver, fearing to give him a loaded one. Gertrude, Bailey of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested for embezzlement. Halsey said Armstrong wrecked his own bank and was killed. Bailey, Paul Armstrong's death was announced. Halsey's fiancée, Louise Armstrong, was found at the lodge. The lodgekeeper said Louise and Arnold had a long talk the night of the murder. Louise was prostrated. Louise told Halsey, that while she still loved him she was to marry another, and that he would despise her when he learned the whole story. It developed that Dr. Walker and Louise were to be married. A prowler was heard in the house. Louise was found at the bottom of the circular staircase. Louise said she had heard a knock at the door and answered it. Something brushed past her on the stairway and she fainted. Bailey is suspected of Armstrong's murder. After "seeing a ghost," Thomas, the lodgekeeper, was found dead. A slip was found in his pocket bearing the name "Lucien Wallace, 14 Elm street, Richfield."

## CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

"Certain."  
"In what part?"  
"In the east wing."  
"Can you tell me when these intrusions occurred, and what the purpose seemed to be? Was it robbery?"  
"No," I said decidedly. "As to time, once on Friday night a week ago, again the following night, when Arnold Armstrong was murdered, and again last Friday night."  
The doctor looked serious. He seemed to be debating some question in his mind, and to reach a decision.  
"Miss Innes," he said, "I am in a peculiar position; I understand your attitude, of course; but—do you think you are wise? Ever since you have come here there have been hostile demonstrations against you and your family. I'm not a croaker, but—take a warning. Leave before anything occurs that will cause you a life-long regret."  
"I am willing to take the responsibility," I said coldly.  
I think he gave me up then as a poor proposition. He asked to be shown where Arnold Armstrong's body had been found, and I took him there. He scrutinized the whole place carefully, examining the stairs and the lock. When he had taken a formal farewell I was confident of one thing. Dr. Walker would do anything he could to get me away from Sunnyside.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### Fourteen Elm Street.

It was Monday evening when we found the body of poor Thomas. Monday night had been uneventful; things were quiet at the house and the peculiar circumstances of the old man's death had been carefully kept from the servants. Rosie took charge of the dining room and pantry, in the absence of a butler, and, except for the warning of the Casanova doctor, everything breathed of peace.  
Affairs at the Traders' bank were progressing slowly. The failure had hit small stockholders very hard, the minister of the little Methodist chapel in Casanova among them. He had received as a legacy from an uncle a few shares of stock in the Traders' bank, and now his joy was turned to bitterness; he had to sacrifice everything he had in the world, and his feeling against Paul Armstrong, dead, as he was, must have been bitter in the extreme. He was asked to officiate at the simple services when the dead banker's body was interred in Casanova churchyard, but the good man providentially took cold, and a substitute was called in.  
A few days after the services he called to see me, a kind-faced little man, in a very bad frock-coat and laundered tie. I think he was uncertain as to my connection with the Armstrong family, and dubious whether I considered Mr. Armstrong's taking away a matter for condolence or congratulation. He was not long in doubt.  
I liked the little man. He had known Thomas well, and had promised to officiate at the services in the rickety African Zion church. He told me more of himself than he knew, and before he left I astonished him—and myself, I admit—by promising a new carpet for his church. He was much affected, and I gathered that he had yearned over his ragged chapel as a mother over a half-clothed child.  
"You are laying up treasures, Miss Innes," he said brokenly, "where neither moth nor rust corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal."  
I sent him home in the car, with a bunch of bothose roses for his wife, and he was quite overwhelmed. As for me, I had a generous glow that

was cheap at the price of a church carpet. I received less gratification—and less gratitude—when I presented the new silver communion set to St. Barnabas.

I had a great many things to think about in those days. I made a list of questions and possible answers, but I seemed only to be working around in a circle. I always ended where I began. The list was something like this:

Who had entered the house the night before the murder?

Thomas claimed it was Mr. Bailey, whom he had seen on the foot-path, and who owned the pearl cut-link.

Why did Arnold Armstrong come back after he had left the house the night he was killed?

No answer. Was it on the mission Louise had mentioned?

Who admitted him?

Gertrude said she had locked the east entry. There was no key on the dead man or in the door. He must have been admitted from within.

Who had been locked in the clothes closet?

Some one unfamiliar with the house, evidently. Only two people missing from the household, Rosie and Gertrude. Rosie had been at the lodge. Therefore—had it been Gertrude? Might it not have been the mysterious intruder again?

Who had accosted Rosie on the drive? Again—perhaps the nightly visitor. It seemed more likely some one who suspected a secret at the lodge. Was Louise under surveillance?

Who had passed Louise on the circular staircase?

Could it have been Thomas? The key to the east entry made this a possibility. But why was he there, if it were indeed he?

Who had made the hole in the trunk-room wall?

It was not vandalism. It had been done quietly, and with deliberate purpose. If I had only known how to read the purpose of that gaping aperture what I might have saved in anxiety and mental strain!

Why had Louise left her people and come home to live at the lodge?

There was no answer, as yet, to this, or to the next questions.

of Thomas' funeral in the village, and Alex and I were in the conservatory cutting flowers for the old man's casket. Liddy is never so happy as when she is making herself wretched, and now her mouth drooped while her eyes were triumphant.

"I always said there were plenty of things going on here, right under our noses, that we couldn't see," she said, holding out her apron.

"I don't see with my nose," I remarked. "What have you got there?"

Liddy pushed aside a half dozen geranium pots, and in the space thus cleared she dumped the contents of her apron—a handful of tiny bits of paper. Alex had stepped back, but I saw him watching her curiously.

"Wait a moment, Liddy," I said. "You have been going through the library paper-basket again!"

Liddy was arranging her bits of paper with the skill of long practice and paid no attention.

"Did it ever occur to you," I went on, putting my hand over the scraps, "that when people tear up their correspondence it is for the express purpose of keeping it from being read?"

"If they wasn't ashamed of it they wouldn't take so much trouble, Miss Rachel," Liddy said oracularly. "More than that, with things happening every day, I consider it my duty. If you don't read and act on this, I shall give it to that Jamieson, and I'll venture he'll not go back to the city to-day."

That decided me. If the scraps had anything to do with the mystery ordinary conventions had no value. So Liddy arranged the scraps, like working out one of the puzzle-pictures children play with, and she did it with much the same eagerness. When it was finished she stepped aside while I read it.

"Wednesday night, nine o'clock.



anything tangible that we have had yet."

Warner took us to Richfield in the car. It was about 25 miles by railroad, but by taking a series of atrociously rough short cuts we got there very quickly. It was a pretty little town, on the river, and back on the hill I could see the Morton big country house, where Halsey and Gertrude had been staying until the night of the murder.

Elm street was almost the only street, and number 14 was easily found. It was a small white house, dilapidated without having gained anything picturesque, with a low window and a porch only a foot or so above the bit of a lawn. There was a baby-carriage in the path, and from a swing at the side came the sound of conflict. Three small children were disputing vociferously, and a faded young woman with a kindly face was trying to hush the clamor. When she saw us she untied her gingham apron and came around to the porch.

"Good afternoon," I said. Jamieson lifted his hat, without speaking. "I came to inquire about a child named Lucien Wallace."

"I am glad you have come," she said. "In spite of the other children, I think the little fellow is lonely. We thought perhaps his mother would be here to-day."

Mr. Jamieson stepped forward. "You are Mrs. Tate?" I wondered how the detective knew.

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Tate, we want to make some inquiries. Perhaps in the house—"

"Come right in," she said hospitably. And soon we were in the little shabby parlor, exactly like a thousand of its prototypes. Mrs. Tate sat uneasily, her hands folded in her lap.

"How long has Lucien been here?" Mr. Jamieson asked.

"Since a week ago last Friday. His mother paid one week's board in advance, the other has not been paid."

"Was he ill when he came?"

"No, sir, not that you'd call sick. He was getting better of typhoid, she said, and he's picking up fine."

"Will you tell me his mother's name and address?"

"That's the trouble," the young woman said, knitting her brows. "She gave her name as Mrs. Wallace, and said she had no address. She was looking for a boarding house in town. She said she worked in a department store, and couldn't take care of the child properly, and he needed fresh air and milk. I had three children of my own, and one more didn't make much difference in the work, but—I wish she would pay this week's board."

"Did she say what store it was?"

"No, sir, but all the boy's clothes came from King's. He has far too fine clothes for the country."

There was a chorus of shouts and shrill yells from the front door, followed by the loud stamping of children's feet and a throny "whoa, whoa!" Into the room came a tandem team of two chubby youngsters, a boy and a girl, harnessed with a clothes-line, and driven by a laughing boy of about seven, in tan overalls and brass buttons. The small driver caught my attention at once; he was a beautiful child, and, although he showed traces of recent severe illness, his skin had now the clear transparency of health.

"Whoa, flinders," he shouted. "You're going to smash the trap."

Mr. Jamieson coaxed him over by holding out a lead pencil, striped blue and yellow.

"Now, then," he said, when the boy had taken the lead pencil and was testing its usefulness on the detect-

ive's cuff, "now then, I'll bet you don't know what your name is!"

"I do," said the boy. "Lucien Wallace."

"Great! And what's your mother's name?"

"Mother, of course. What's your mother's name?"

And he pointed to me! I am going to stop wearing black; it doubles a woman's age.

"And where did you live before you came here?" The detective was polite enough not to smile.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## PRISON LIFE IS A LUXURY

Convicts Have a Delightful Time in the Comic Opera Jails of Switzerland.

Prison life in Switzerland is a luxury instead of punishment. The comic opera jail at Thorburg, where the inmates did as they pleased, has only recently been suppressed by the Bern authorities, yet details are published of a similar institution at Sarnen, in the canton of Oswald.

Sarnen is apparently an ideal penal resort, for the happy criminals who are sentenced to terms of "detention" in that institution have a far better time than hundreds of "free" Swiss citizens who are forced to earn their bread.

A correspondent of a Lausanne paper states that he was passing through Sarnen when he saw a number of men, dressed in dark blue clothes with white stripes, walking about the village, smoking and joking.

Others were seated in a cafe, and some were working in a leisurely manner, carrying bricks for the construction of a new building. To his astonishment the correspondent found that the men were convicts from the cantonal prison cistern.

These convicts are permitted to leave the prison early in the morning and find work around Sarnen, or walk about the country until nightfall, when they return of their own accord to the prison.

They are unaccompanied by warders, and there is nothing to prevent their escaping, but they are far too comfortable to think of relinquishing their quarters, for they have as much liberty as other men, and are, moreover, fed and lodged for nothing.

The money earned by these convicts who choose to work can be spent as they like. One convict, who is employed as a gardener by a local magistrate, sends his monthly salary to his wife and children.

Two or three convicts "escaped" some weeks ago, but they eventually returned to the prison in a half-finished condition, and after being severely reprimanded, they were allowed to return to their apartments.

## Bachelor Snubbers.

When the bachelor, who is undeniably that, finds girls staring at him with their noses turned up and a cold, icy stare in their eyes, he may be sure that he is in the presence of bachelor snubbers. The organization made at Paterson, N. J., reputed to have been a home for anarchy and like delusions, is composed of young women who disdain the men who disdain the maidens. Their slogan is: "If he wants to flock himself, let him flock till he wearsies." He will be cut out of lawn parties and river chills and all the other incidents of sentimentality and feminine sociability.

The provocation to this position was the organization of a bachelor association by the fellows who thought they could play friends and yet not go further. The girls believe they will break up the recalcitrant organization. As the movement has spread, the snubbers may be met anywhere, except in Baltimore, where the girls are so pretty and alluring that they have to shoo off the men who flock about them with proposals to wed.

## "Drugs Is Drugs."

The writer took a doctor's prescription to the drug store to have it filled. In some way this piece of paper became torn in half, so that when the patron handed the druggist the first piece, that public servant at once measured out the ammonia salt it called for and placed the small vial before his customer.

"How much?" asked the patron.

"Ten cents."

"Oh, beg pardon!" said the purchaser, at this juncture finding the remainder of the prescription in his pocket.

"This piece says to add enough water to the other to make it four ounces."

"Very well," rejoined the apothecary, dumping the contents of the small vial into a four-ounce bottle and adding the required water. "There you are, sir, 40 cents more, please."

"What! 10 cents for ammonia and 40 cents for the water?"

"Exactly. The doctor's name written after the water makes it a prescription under 50 cents."—Judge's Library.

## Qualified For Musical Comedy.

De Wolf Hopper, in the course of a visit to Coney Island, praised the lithe figures of the young girls who, in blue bathing suits and silk stockings, paced the glittering and windswept beach.

"These graceful girls," said the comedian, "make me think of a young lady I took down the other night to dinner."

"Mr. Hopper," she said, as she sipped her cup of cold consommé, "did you know I was starring in musical comedy now?"

"Why, no," said I, "I didn't even know you'd studied singing."

"Oh, I never studied singing," she replied. "I took a gymnastic course for the figure."

## Unfortunate.

"I am so unfortunate," she said, impressively and confidentially, "as to possess the gift of divining exactly what every one thinks of me."

He (absent-mindedly); "That is unfortunate."—Scraps.

## A Slight Mistake.

"See here, did you tell Von Clubber I was the worst liar you ever met?"

"Not much, old chap—I told him you were the best."—Judge.

## A TRAIN LOAD OF TOBACCO.

Twenty-four Carloads Purchased for Lewis' Single Binder Cigar Factory.

What is probably the biggest lot of all fancy grade tobacco held by any factory in the United States has just been purchased by Frank P. Lewis, of Peoria, for the manufacture of Lewis' Single Binder Cigars. The lot will make twenty-four carloads, and is selected from what is considered by experts to be the finest crop raised in many years. The purchase of tobacco is sufficient to last the factory more than two years. An extra price was paid for the selection. Smokers of Lewis' Single Binder Cigars will appreciate this tobacco.

—Peoria Star, January 16, 1909.

## Tuberculosis in the Prisons.

The fact that 100,000 prisoners are discharged from the jails and prisons of the country annually, and that from 10 to 15 per cent. of them have tuberculosis, makes the problem of providing special places for their treatment while they are confined a serious one. So important is the problem that the Prison association of New York in cooperation with the State Charities Aid association, is preparing to inaugurate a special campaign for the prevention of tuberculosis in the penal institutions of the state, and will seek to enlist the co-operation of all prison physicians and anti-tuberculosis societies in this work.

## Deduction in a Street Car.

The Heavyweight—Pardon me, did I step on your foot, sir?

Crowd—If you didn't, begorry, then the roof must hev fell on it.—Puck.

## A perfect love, even when lost, is still an eternal possession, a pain so sacred that its deep peace often grows into an absolute content.—Hitchcock.

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## And some people never appreciate a rose until they encounter the thorn.

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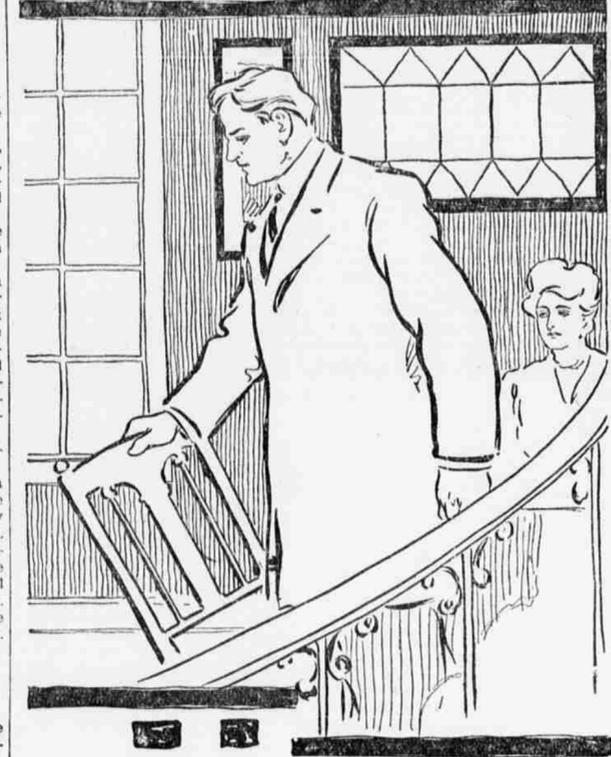
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He Scrutinized the Whole Place Carefully.

Why did both she and Dr. Walker warn us away from the house?

What did Thomas see in the shadows the night he died?

What was the meaning of the subtle change in Gertrude?

Was Jack Bailey an accomplice or a victim in the looting of the Traders' bank?

What all-powerful reason made Louise determine to marry Dr. Walker?

The examiners were still working on the books of the Traders' bank, and it was probable that several weeks would elapse before everything was cleared up. The firm of expert accountants who had examined the books some two months before testified that every bond, every piece of valuable paper, was there at that time.

It had been shortly after their examination that the president, who had been in bad health, had gone to California. Mr. Bailey was still ill at the Knickerbocker, and in this, as in other ways, Gertrude's conduct puzzled me. She seemed indifferently refused to discuss matters pertaining to the bank, and never, to my knowledge, either wrote to him or went to see him. Gradually I came to the conclusion that Gertrude, with the rest of the world, believed her lover guilty, and—although I believed it myself, for that matter—I was irritated by her indifference.

Girls in my day did not meekly accept the public's verdict as to the man they loved.

But presently something occurred that made me think that under Gertrude's surface calm there was a seething flood of emotions.

Tuesday morning the detective made a careful search of the grounds, but he found nothing. In the afternoon he disappeared, and it was late that night when he came home. He said he would have to go back to the city the following day, and arranged with Halsey and Alex to guard the house.

Liddy came to me on Wednesday morning with her black silk apron held up like a bag and her eyes big with virtuous wrath. It was the day

Bridge, I read aloud. Then, aware of Alex's stare, I turned on Liddy.

"Some one is to play bridge to-night at nine o'clock," I said. "Is that your business, or mine?"

Liddy was aggrieved. She was about to reply when I scooped up the pieces and left the conservatory.

"Now then," I said, when we got outside, "will you tell me why you choose to take Alex into your confidence? He's no fool. Do you suppose he thinks any one in this house is going to play bridge to-night at nine o'clock, by appointment? I suppose you have shown it in the kitchen, and instead of my being able to slip down to the bridge to-night quietly, and see who is there, the whole household will be going in a procession."

"Nobody knows it," Liddy said humbly. "I found it in the basket in Miss Gertrude's dressing room. Look at the back of the sheet." I turned over some of the scraps, and, sure enough, it was a blank deposit slip from the Traders' bank. So Gertrude was going to meet Jack Bailey that night by the bridge! And I had thought he was ill! It hardly seemed like the action of an innocent man—this avoidance of daylight, and of his fiancée's people. I decided to make certain, however, by going to the bridge that night.

After luncheon Mr. Jamieson suggested that I go with him to Richfield, and I consented.

"I am inclined to place more faith in Dr. Stewart's story," he said, "since I found that scrap in old Thomas' pocket. It bears out the statement that the woman with the child, and the woman who quarreled with Armstrong, are the same. It looks as if Thomas had stumbled on to some affair which was more or less discreditable to the dead man, and, with a certain loyalty to the family, had kept it to himself. Then, you see, your story about the woman at the card-room window begins to mean something. It is the nearest approach to

ive's cuff, "now then, I'll bet you don't know what your name is!"

"I do," said the boy. "Lucien Wallace."

"Great! And what's your mother's name?"

"Mother, of course. What's your mother's name?"

And he pointed to me! I am going to stop wearing black; it doubles a woman's age.

"And where did you live before you came here?" The detective was polite enough not to smile.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



I Could See the Mortons' Big Country House.

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