



SYNOPSIS.

Giles Dudley arrived in San Francisco to join his friend and distant relative Henry Wilton, whom he was to assist in an important and mysterious task...

fectively. "Those sales were all right. Well, I was afraid you couldn't get above three thousand. I didn't get more than two thousand in the other Boards and on the Street."

"That was the best I could do," I said modestly. "They averaged at sixty-five. Omega got away from us this afternoon like a runaway horse."

"Yes, yes," said the King of the Street, studying his papers with drawn brows. "That's all right. I'll have to wait a bit before going further."

I bowed as became one who had no idea of the plans ahead. "And now," said Doddridge Knapp, turning on me a keen and lowering gaze, "I'd like to know what call you have to be spying on me?"

"I opened my eyes wide in wonder. "Spying? I don't understand."

"No?" said he, with something between a growl and a snarl. "Well, maybe you don't understand that, either. I felt sure that I did not. My ignorance grew into amazement as I read. The slip bore the words: 'I have bought Crown Diamond. What's the limit?' Wilton."

"I certainly don't understand," I said. "What does it mean?"

"The man who wrote it ought to know," growled Doddridge Knapp. "You couldn't pick Omega off the bushes this afternoon, Mr. Wilton," said Wallbridge, wiping his bald head vigorously. "There's fools at all times, and some of 'em were here and ready to drop what they had; but not many. I gathered in six hundred for you, but I had to fight for it."

I thanked the merry broker, and gave him a check for his balance. Eppner had done better with a wider margin, but all told I had added but three thousand one hundred shares to my list. I wondered how much of this had been sold to me by my employer. Plainly, if Doddridge Knapp was needing Omega stock he would have to pay for it.

There was no one to be seen as I reached Room 15. The connecting door was closed and locked, and no sound came from behind it. I turned to arrange the books, to keep from a bad habit of thinking over the inexplicable. An hour passed and no Doddridge Knapp. It was long past office hours. Just as I was considering whether my duty to my employer constrained me to wait longer, I caught sight of an envelope that had been slipped under the door. It was in cipher, but it yielded to the key with which Doddridge Knapp had provided me. I made it out to be this:

"Come to my house to-night. Bring your contracts with you. Knapp."

I was thrown into some perplexity by this order. For a little I suspected a trap, but on second thought this seemed unlikely. The office furnished as convenient a place for homicidal diversions as he could wish, if these were in his intention, and possibly a visit to Doddridge Knapp in his own house would give me a better clue to his habits and purposes, and a better chance of bringing home to him his awful crime, than a month together on the Street.

of a snake. I gave chase to him, but couldn't overhaul him. He squirmed away in the crowd, I guess. "Why didn't you tell me?" he said in a steady voice.

"I didn't suppose it was worth coming back for, after I got into the street. And, besides, you were busy."

"Yes, yes, you were right; you are not to come—of course, of course." The King of the Street looked at me curiously, and then said smoothly: "But this isn't business." And he plunged into the papers once more.

"There were over nine thousand shares sold this afternoon, and I got only five thousand of them." I suppose Decker picked the others up," I said.

The King of the Street did me the honor to look at me in amazement. "Decker!" he roared. "How did you—? Then he paused and his voice dropped to its ordinary tone. "I reckon you're right. What gave you the idea?"

I frankly detailed my conversation with Wallbridge. As I went on, I fancied that the bushy brows drew down and a little anxiety showed beneath them.

I had hardly finished my account when there was a knock at the door, and the servant appeared. "Mrs. Knapp's compliments, and she would like to see Mr. Wilton when you are done," he said.

I could with difficulty repress an exclamation, and my heart climbed into my throat. I was ready to face the Wolf in his den, but here was a different matter. I recalled that Mrs. Knapp was a more intimate acquaintance of Henry Wilton's than Doddridge Knapp had been, and I saw Niagara ahead of my sky.

"Yes, yes; quite likely," said my employer, referring to my story of Wallbridge. "I heard something of the kind from my men. I'll know tomorrow for certain, I expect. I forgot to tell you that the ladies would want to see you. They have missed you lately."

And the Wolf motioned me to the door where the servant waited. Here was a predicament. I was missed and wanted—and by the ladies. My heart dropped back from my throat, and I felt it throbbing in the lowest recesses of my boot-heels as I rose and followed my guide.

CHAPTER XII.

Luella Knapp.

Two women rose to greet me as I entered the room. "Good evening," said the elder woman, holding out her hand. "You have neglected us for a long time." There was something of reproach as well as civility in the voice.

"Yes," I replied, adjusting my manner nicely to her, "I have been very busy."

"Busy? How provoking of you to say so! You should never be too busy to take the commands of the ladies."

"That is why I am here," I interrupted with my best bow. But she continued without noting it:

Romance of Great Singer.

M. Jean Note, the famous barytone of the Paris opera house, and who has sung more often on the stage of the Paris opera than any other living singer, left Paris the other day to be present at the fetes which were held recently in his native town of Tournay, in Belgium, in honor of the great artist's jubilee.

"Luella wagered with me that you would make that excuse. I expected something more original."

"I am very sorry," I said, with a reflection of the bantering air she had assumed.

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed the younger woman, to whom my eyes had turned as Mrs. Knapp spoke her name. "How very unkind of you to say so, when I have just won a pair of gloves by it. Good evening to you!" And she held out her hand.

It was with a strong effort that I kept my self-possession, as for the first time I clasped the hand of Luella Knapp.

Was it the thrill of her touch, the glance of her eye, or the magnetism of her presence, that set my pulses beating to a new measure, and gave my spirit a breath from a new world? Whatever the case, as I looked into the clear-cut face and the frank gray eyes of the woman before me, I was swept by a flood of emotion that was near overpowering my self-control.

I mastered the emotion in a moment and took the seat to which she had waved me.

I was puzzled a little at the tone in which she addressed me. There was a suggestion of resentment in her manner that grew on me as we talked.

Can I describe her? Of what use to try? She was not beautiful, and "pretty" was too petty a word to apply to Luella Knapp. "Fine looking," if said with the proper emphasis, might give some idea of appearance, for she was tall in figure, with features that were impressive in their attractiveness.

Through all the conversation the idea that Miss Knapp was regarding me with a hidden disapproval was growing on me. I decided that Henry had made some uncommon blunder on his last visit and that I was suffering the penalty for it. The admiration I felt for the young woman deepened with every sentence she spoke, and I was ready to do anything to restore the good opinion that Henry might have endangered, and in lieu of apology exerted myself to the utmost to be agreeable.

I was unconscious of the flight of time until Mrs. Knapp turned from some other guests and walked toward us.

"Come, Henry," she said pointedly. "Luella is not to monopolize you all the time. Besides, there's Mr. Inman dying to speak to her."

I promptly hated Mr. Inman with all my heart and felt not the slightest objection to his demise; but at her gesture of command I rose and accompanied Mrs. Knapp, as a young man with eye-glasses and a smirk came to take my place. I left Luella Knapp, congratulating myself over my cleverness in escaping the pitfalls that lined my way.

"Now I've a chance to speak to you at last," said Mrs. Knapp.

"At your service," I bowed. "I owe you something."

"Indeed?" Mrs. Knapp raised her eyebrows in surprise. "For your kind recommendation to Mr. Knapp."

"My recommendation? You have a little the advantage of me."

"I was stricken with painful doubts, and the cold sweat started upon me. Perhaps this was not Mrs. Knapp after all."

"Oh, perhaps you didn't mean it," I said.

"Indeed I did, if it recommends, I'm afraid unconsciously, though. Mr. Kn. I do not consult me about his busic."

I was in doubt no longer. It was the injured pride of the wife that spoke in the tone.

"I'm none the less obliged," I said carelessly. "He assured me that he acted on your words."

"What on earth are you doing for Mr. Knapp?" she asked earnestly, dropping her half-bantering tone. There was a trace of apprehension in her eyes.

"I'm afraid Mr. Knapp wouldn't think your recommendations were quite justified if I should tell you. Just get him in a corner and ask him."

"I suppose it is that dreadful stock market."

"Oh, madam, let me say the chicken market. There is a wonderful opportunity just now for corner in fowls."

"There are a good many to be plucked in the market that Mr. Knapp will look after," she said with a smile. But there was something of a worried look behind it. "Oh, you know, Henry, that I can't bear the market. I have seen too much of the misery that has come from it."

She shuddered as she looked about her, as though in fancy she saw herself turned from the palace into the street.

"Mr. Knapp is not a man to lose," I said.

"Mr. Knapp is a strong man," she said with a proud straightening of her figure. "But the whirlpool can suck down the strongest swimmer."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Father—I told you not to go with that boy. Bobby—I had to, father, 'cause he had hold of my hair!

Case of Shocking Neglect. Friend—What has become of Celestine, your maid? Mrs. Snobolts—I had to discharge her. She had no consideration for Fido. Friend—Why, I always thought she took the most tender care of the pet. Mrs. Snobolts—So did I till I found she was using her own comb on him without first sterilizing it.

Save the Babies. INFANT MORTALITY is something frightful. We can hardly realize that of all the children born in civilized countries, twenty-two per cent, or nearly one-quarter, die before they reach one year; thirty-seven per cent, or more than one-third, before they are five, and one-half before they are fifteen!

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JUMPING AT A CONCLUSION. Marriage Did Not Follow the Nineteen Year's Courtship. In the amiable way of villagers, they were discussing the matrimonial affairs of a couple who, though recently wed, had begun to find the yoke of Hymen a burden.

VERY GOOD REASON. Father—I told you not to go with that boy. Bobby—I had to, father, 'cause he had hold of my hair!

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