



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, and who accompanied Dudley on the ferry boat trip into the city. The remarkable resemblance of the two men is noted and commented on by passengers on the ferry. They see a man with a cane and a hat, who is the mysterious figure of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but the occurrence causes him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. Wilton leaves Giles in their room, with instructions to wait for his return. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help." Dudley is summoned to the morgue and there finds the dead body of his friend, Henry Wilton. And thus Wilton dies without ever explaining to Dudley the puzzling work he was to perform in San Francisco. In order to discover the secret mission his friend had entrusted to him, Dudley continues his disguise and permits himself to be known as Henry Wilton. Dudley, mistaken for Wilton, is employed by Knapp to assist in a stock brokerage deal. Giles Dudley finds himself in a room with Mother Borton who makes a confidant of him. He can hear nothing about the mysterious boy further than that it is Tim Terrell and Darby Meeker who are after him. He is told that "Dicky" Nahl is a traitor, playing both hands in the game. Dudley gets his first knowledge of Becker, who is Knapp's enemy on the Board. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is attracted by the beauty of Luella, his daughter. He learns the note was forged. He is provided with four guards, Brown, Barkhouse, Fitzhugh and Porter. He learns there is to be no trouble about money as all expenses will be paid, the life of the guards being paid by one "Richmond." The body of Henry Wilton is committed to the vault. Dudley responds to a note and visits Mother Borton in company with Policeman Carson. Giles Dudley again visits the Knapp home.

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

"Oh, Mr. Wilton, you'll pardon my boldness, I'm sure," she said with an amiable flirt of the head, as I seated myself beside her and watched Luella melt away into the next room; "but I was afraid you had forgotten all about us poor women, and it's a dreadful thing to be in this great house when there isn't a man about, though of course there are the servants, but you can't count them as men, besides some of them being Chinamen. And we—I that is, I really did want to see you, and we ought to have so much to talk over, for I've heard that your mother's first cousin was a Bowser, and I do so want to see that dear, delightful Chinatown that I've heard so much about, though they say it's horrid and dirty, but you'll let us see that for ourselves, won't you, and did you ever go through Chinatown, Mr. Wilton?"

Mrs. Bowser pulled up her verbal coach-and-six so suddenly that I felt as though she must have been pitched off the box.

"Oh," said I carelessly, "I've seen the place often enough."

"How nice!" Then suddenly looking grave Mrs. Bowser spoke from behind her fan. "But I hope, Mr. Wilton, there's nothing there that a lady shouldn't see."

I hastened to assure her that it was possible to avoid everything that would bring a blush to the cheek of a matron of her years.

Mrs. Bowser at this rattled on without coming to any point. I was listening to the flow of her high-pitched voice without getting any idea from it, when my wandering attention was suddenly recalled by the words, "Mr. Knapp."

"What was that?" I asked in some confusion. "I didn't catch your meaning."

"I was saying I thought it strange Mr. Knapp wouldn't go with us, and he got awfully cross when I pressed him, and said—oh, Mr. Wilton, he said such a dreadful word—that he'd be oversteering something if he would ever go into such a lot of dens of—oh, I can't repeat his dreadful language—but wasn't it strange, Mr. Wilton?"

"Very," I said diplomatically; "but it isn't worth while to wait for him, then."

"Oh, laws, no!—he'll be home to-morrow, but he won't go."

"Home to-morrow!" I exclaimed. "I thought he wasn't to come till Wednesday."

Mrs. Bowser looked a little uncomfortable.

"I guess he's old enough to come and go when he likes," she said. But her flow of words seemed to desert her.

"Very true," I admitted. "I wonder what's bringing him back in such a hurry."

Mrs. Bowser's beady eyes turned on me in doubt, and for a moment she was dumb. Then she followed this miracle by another, and spoke in a low tone of voice.

"It's not for me to say anything against a man in his own house, but I don't like to talk of Doddridge Knapp."

"What's the matter?" I asked. "A little rough in his speech?" Oh, Mrs. Bowser, you should make allowances for a man who has had to fight his way in the roughest business life in the world, and not expect too much of his polish."

"Oh, laws, he's polite enough," whispered Mrs. Bowser. "It isn't that—oh, I don't see how she ever married him."

I followed the glance that Mrs. Bowser gave on interrupting herself with this declaration, and saw Mrs. Knapp approaching us.

"Oh," she exclaimed cheerily, "is it settled? Have you made all the arrangements, Cousin Julia?"

"Well, I declare! I'd forgotten all about telling him," cried Mrs. Bowser in her shrillest tone. "I'd just taken it for a fact that he'd know when to come."

"That's a little too much to expect, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Knapp, smiling gaily at Mrs. Bowser's management.

"I see that I shall have to arrange this thing myself. Will Monday night suit you, Henry?"

"As well as another," said I politely, concealing my feelings as a victim of feminine diplomacy.

"You have told him who are going, haven't you?" said Mrs. Knapp, to Mrs. Bowser.

"Laws, no! I never thought but that he knew."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Knapp. "What a gift as a mindreader Mr. Wilton ought to have! Well, I suppose I'd better not trust to that Henry. There's to be Mrs. Bowser, of course, and Mr. and Mrs. Carter, and Mr. Horton, and—oh, yes—Luella."

My heart gave a jump, and the trip to Chinatown suddenly became an object of interest.

"I'm afraid," said an inquiring voice, and Luella herself stood by her mother.

"Yes," said Mrs. Knapp. "It's the Chinatown expedition for Monday night."

Luella looked annoyed, and tapped her foot to the floor impatiently.

"With Mr. Wilton," there was the slightest emphasis on the words, "to accompany the party, I shouldn't think it would be necessary for me to go."

"It is either you or I," said Mrs. Knapp.

"You will be needed to protect Mr. Horton," said I sarcastically.

"Oh, what a task!" she said gaily. "I shall be ready." And she turned away before I could put in another word.

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"What's up, Dicky?"

"I guess it's the devil," said Dicky, so gravely that I broke into a laugh.

"He's right at home if he's come to this town," I said.

"I'm glad you find it so funny," said Dicky in an injured tone. "You was scared enough last time."

"Well, I've kept out of his claws this far, and it's no use to worry. What's he trying to do now?"

"That's what I've been trying to find out all the evening. They're noisy enough, but they're too thick to let one get near where there's anything going on—that is, if he has a fancy for keeping a whole skin."

"Suppose we go down there now," I suggested. "We might find out something."

Dicky stopped short.

"Caesar's ghost!" he gasped; "what next? Wouldn't you like to touch off a few powder-kags for amusement? Won't you show a pistol into your mouth to show how easy you can stop the bullet?"

"Why, you have been down there and are all right," I argued.

"Well, there nothing much to happen to me, but where would you be if they got hold of you? You're getting off your cabcase, old fellow," said Dicky anxiously.

"If I could see Mother Borton I would fix it," I said confidently.

"What! That she-devil!" cried Dicky. "She'd give you up to have your throat cut in a minute if she could get a four-bit piece for your carcass. I guess she could get more than that on you, too."

Mother Borton's warnings against Dicky Nahl returned to me with force.

"Come in," I said, unlocking the door and lighting up my room. "You can be as angry as you like in here, and it won't hurt anything."

Mother Borton stormed a bit, and then sullenly walked in and took a chair. Silence fell on her as she crossed the threshold, but she glowered on us with fierce eyes.

"It's quite an agreeable surprise to see you," I ventured as cheerfully as I could, as she made no move to speak. My followers looked awkward and uncomfortable.

At the sound of my voice, Mother Borton's bent brows relaxed a little.

"If you'd send these fellows out, I reckon we could talk a bit better," she said sourly.

"Certainly. Just wait in the hall, boys; and close the door."

Porter and Barkhouse ambled out, and Mother Borton gave her chair a hitch that brought us face to face.

"I reckon you don't think I come on a visit of perillousness," she said sharply after a brief silence.

I murmured something about being glad to entertain her at any time.

"Nonsense!" she sniffed. "I'm a vile old woman that the likes of you would never put eyes on twice if it wasn't for your business—none knows it better than me. I don't know why I should put myself out to help ye." Her tone had a touch of pathos under its hardness.

"I know why," I said, a little touched. "It's because you like me."

She turned a softened eye on me.

"You're right," she said almost tenderly, with a flash of womanly feeling on her seamed and evil face. "I've took a fancy to ye and no mistake, and I'd risk something to help ye."

"I knew you would," I said heartily.

"And that's what I come to do," she said with a sparkle of pleasure in her eyes. "I've come to warn ye."

"New dangers?" I inquired cheerfully. My prudence suggested that I had better omit any mention of the warning from Dicky Nahl.

"The same ones," said Mother Borton shortly, "only more of 'em."

"What is the latest plot?" I asked gravely, as I fancied that my light manner grated on my strange guest.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "But you know something," I argued.

"Maybe you know what I know better than I know it myself," growled Mother Borton with a significant glance.

I resigned myself to await her humor.

"Not at all," said I carelessly. "I only know that you've come to tell me something, and that you'll tell it in your own good time."

"It's due to see that you've learned not to drive a woman," she returned with grim irony. "It's something to know at your age."

I smiled sympathetically upon her, and she continued:

"I might as well tell ye the whole of it, though I reckon my throat's as like to be slit over it as not."

"I'll never breathe a word of it," I replied fervently.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XVII.

An Echo of Warning.

"All quiet?" I asked of my guards, as we took our way down the street.

"Dicky Nahl was along here," said Porter, "and he said Terrell and Meeker and the other gang was holding a powwow at Borton's, and we'd best look out for surprises."

"Was that all?"

"Well, he said he guessed there was a new deal on hand, and they was a buzzin' like a nest of hornets."

"Well," said I, "we had better go down to Borton's and look into this matter."

There was silence for a time. My guards walked beside me without speaking, but I felt the protest in their manner. At last Barkhouse said respectfully:

"There's no use to do that, sir. You'd better send some one that ain't so likely to be nabbed, or that won't matter much if he is. We'd be in a pretty fix if you was to be took."

"Here comes Dicky now," said Porter, as a dark figure came swinging lightly along.

"Hullo!" cried Dicky, halting and shading his eyes from the sunlight.

"I was just going up to look for you again."

"What's up, Dicky?"

"I guess it's the devil," said Dicky, so gravely that I broke into a laugh.

"He's right at home if he's come to this town," I said.

"I'm glad you find it so funny," said Dicky in an injured tone. "You was scared enough last time."

"Well, I've kept out of his claws this far, and it's no use to worry. What's he trying to do now?"

house marched stolidly along, showing little disposition to talk.

"What's that?" I exclaimed, stopping to listen.

"What was it?" asked Barkhouse, as we stopped on the upper landing and gazed into the obscurity.

"I thought I heard a noise," said I.

"Who's there?"

"It was a rat," said Porter. "I've heard 'em out here of nights."

"Well, just light that other gas jet," I said. "It will help to make things pleasant in case of accidents."

The doors came out of the darkness as the second jet blazed up, but nothing else was to be seen.

Suddenly there was a scramble, and something sprang up before my door.

Porter and I raised the revolvers that were ready in our hands, but Barkhouse spring past us, and in an instant had closed with the figure and held it in his arms.

There was a volley of curses, oaths mingled with sounds that reminded me of nothing so much as a spitting cat, and a familiar voice screamed in almost inarticulate rage:

"Let me go, damn ye, or I'll knife ye!"

"Good heavens!" I cried. "Let her go, Barkhouse. It's Mother Borton."

Mother Borton freed herself with a vicious shake, and called down the wrath of Heaven and hell on the stalwart guard.

"You're the black-hearted spawn of the sewer rats, to take a respectable woman like a bag of meal," cried Mother Borton indignantly, with a fresh string of oaths. "It's fire and brimstone you'll be tasting yet, and you'd a' been there before now, you miserable gutter-picker, if it wasn't for me. And this is the thanks I git from ye!"

"Come in," I said, unlocking the door and lighting up my room. "You can be as angry as you like in here, and it won't hurt anything."

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

Wanted No More Sisters.

One Girl Had Had Enough of Censorious Remarks.

"I didn't think you'd get so angry because I said I thought you ought to wear gray suede shoes with your gray dress instead of white ones. I didn't mean to offend you," her friend very sweetly apologized. "Never mind," she returned softly. "It was all right, but it made me angry for two reasons. First, because I had to wear the white shoes because I didn't have any others that were presentable, and, secondly, because when I left, my family of sisters, who made every possible sort of comment on my clothes, I declared I would never stand it from anybody else. I said to myself that whenever a friend got so friendly that she thought she could treat me like a sister I'd shake her."

She knew it.

"My dear," said the head of the house, looking over his morning paper at his better half, "there is a crisis coming in China."

"I know it!" she roared. "Satan has left only half a dozen pieces whole out of our new dinner set."

ETIQUETTE OF THE PUNCH.

Matter That Is Sometimes a Difficult Thing to Decide.

To punch or not to punch is one of the most difficult questions in life. There is an etiquette of punching, but it does not always help a man much when the contingency arises and he is forced to decide on the spur of the moment whether he will or not. When the lie is given or certain opprobrious epithets are personally applied etiquette calls for a punch. This is supposed to be the irreducible minimum of punching, without the use of which no man can go through life holding his head erect. Beyond this irreducible minimum a man may suit his taste, his disposition and his temper in the use of his fist, within certain limits, without violating the proprieties or incurring disapproval as a bully. There are many optional punches, so to speak, on which the world looks with approval besides these two compulsory punches. The punch chivalrous, for instance, the weapon of modern knight errantry, in defense of the distressed maids and matrons is of the optional but approved sort.

A Much-Palaced Emperor

BEAUTIFUL "ACHILLEION" THE FORTY-NINTH RESIDENCE OF KAISER.



THE LATEST ADDITION TO THE EMPEROR'S SUMMER RESIDENCES

A two hours' walk from the capital of Corfu, in a southerly direction, through a very dingy suburb called San Rocco, and past the little village of Gasturi, brings the dust-covered tourist within sight of one of the most glorious architectural creations in existence. Thickly surrounded by clumps of grayish-green olive-trees and verdant orchards, the Achilleion, the fairy castle of that restless, unfortunate empress who was to die under a murderer's steel, emerges like a white phantom of the past. The beauty of its outward form—a clever imitation of the Pompeian style—is only matched by its lavish and highly artificial inner decoration, on which Empress Elizabeth is said to have spent \$1,250,000, and by the magnificent views it commands. The Achilleion was recently inhabited by the German emperor, his consort, daughter, and a full staff of courtiers; and the affluence thereby created with conceptions of Prussian sobriety, correctness, common sense, and other unromantic Brandenburgian attributes, greatly take away from that castle's bewitching poetry. A thousand pities