BLIND FOLDED

By EADIE ASHLEY WALCOTT

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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 snake eyes, which sends a thrill through Dudley. Wilton promises an explanation of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but occurrences cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. Wilton leaves Giles in their room, with instruction to await his return and shoot any one who tries to enter. Outside there is heard shouts and curses and the noise of a quarrel. Henry rushes in and at his request the roommates quickly exchange clothes, and he hurries out again. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help," and he runs out to find some one being assaulted by a half dozen men. He summons a policeman but they are unable to find any trace of a crime. Giles returns to his room and hunts for some evidence that might explain his strange mission. He finds a map which he endeavors to decipher. 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. "Dicky" takes the supposed Wilton to Mother Borton's. Mother Borton discovers that he is not Wilton. The lights are turned out and a free for all fight follows. Giles Dudley finds himself closeted in a room with Mother Borton who makes a confident of him.

CHAPTER VII. (Continued.)

"My name is Dudley—Giles Dudley."

"Where is Wilton?"

"Dead."

"Dead! Did you kill him?" The half-kindly look disappeared from her eyes and the hard lines settled into an expression of malevolent repulsiveness.

"He was my best friend," I said sadly; and then I described the leading events of the tragedy I had witnessed.

The old woman listened closely, and with hardly the movement of a muscle, to the tale I told.

"And you think he left his job to you?" she said with a sneer.

"I have taken it up as well as I can. To be frank with you, Mrs. Borton, I know nothing about his job. I'm going along on blind chance, and trying to keep a whole skin."

The old woman looked at me in amazement.

"Poor boy!" she exclaimed half-pityingly, half-admiringly. "You put your hands to a job you know nothing about, when Henry Wilton couldn't carry it with all his wits about him."

"I didn't do it," said I sullenly. "It has done itself. Everybody insists that I'm Wilton. If I'm to have my throat slit for him I might as well try to do his work. I wish to Heaven I knew what it was, though."

Mother Borton leaned her head on her hand, and gazed on me thoughtfully for a full minute.

"Young man," said she impressively, "take my advice. There's a train for the East in the mornin'. Just git on board, and never you stop short of Chicago."

"I'm not running away," said I bitterly. "I've got a score to settle with the man who killed Henry Wilton. When that score is settled, I'll go to Chicago or anywhere else. Until that's done, I stay where I can settle it."

Mother Borton caught up the candle and moved it back and forth before my face. In her eyes there was a gleam of savage pleasure.

"By God, he's in earnest!" she said to herself, with a strange laugh. "Tell me again of the man you saw in the alley."

I described Doddridge Knapp.

"And you are going to get even with him? she said with a chuckle that had no mirth in it.

"Yes," said I shortly.

"Why, if you should touch him the people of the city would tear you to pieces."

"I shall not touch him. I'm no assassin!" I exclaimed indignantly. "The law shall take him, and I'll see him hanged as high as Haman."

Mother Borton gave a low, gurgling laugh.

"The law! oh, my liver—the law! How young you are, my boy! Oh, ho, oh ho!" And again she absorbed her mirthless laugh, and gave me an evil grin. Then she became grave again, and laid a claw on my sleeve. "Take my advice now, and git on the train."

"Not I!" I returned stoutly.

"I'm doing it for your own good," she said, with as near an approach to a coaxing tone as she could command. It was long since she had used her voice for such a purpose and it grated. "For my sake I'd like to see you go on and wipe out the whole raft of 'em. But I know what'll happen to ye, honey. I've took a fancy to ye. I don't know why. But there's a look on your face that carries me back for forty years, and—don't try it, dearie."

There were actually tears in the creature's eyes, and her hard, wicked face softened, and became almost tender and womanly.

"I can't give up," I said. "The work is put on me. But can't you help me? I believe you want to. I trust you. Tell me what to do—where I stand. I'm all in the dark, but I must do my work."

It was the best appeal I could have made.

"You're right," she said. "I'm an old fool, and you've got the real sand. You're the first one except Henry Wilton that's trusted me in forty years, and you won't be sorry for it, my boy. You owe me one, now. Where would you have been to-night if I hadn't had the light doused on ye?"

"Oh, that was your doing, was it? I thought my time had come."

"Oh, I was sure you'd know what to do. It was your best chance."

"Then will you help me now?"

The old crone considered, and her face grew sharp and cunning in its look.

"What can I do?"

"Tell me, in God's name, where I stand. What is this dreadful mystery? Who is this boy? Why is he hidden and why do these people want to know where he is? Who is behind me and who threatens me with death?"

I burst out with these question passionately, almost frantically. This was the first time I had had chance to demand them of another human being.

Mother Borton gave me a leer.

"I wish I could tell you, my dear, but I don't know."

"You mean you dare not tell me," I said boldly. "You have done me a great service, but if I am to save myself from the dangers that surround me I must know more. Can't you see that?"

"I MOVED THE CANDLE BACK AND FORTH BEFORE MY FACE—"

"Yes," she nodded. "You're in a hard row of stumps, young man."

"And you can help me."

"Well, I will," she said, suddenly softening again. "I took a shine to you when you came in, an' I says to myself, 'I'll save that young fellow,' an' I done it. And I'll do more. Mr. Wilton was a fine gentleman, an' I'd do something, if I could, to get even with those murderin' gutter-pickers that laid him out on a slab."

She hesitated and looked around at the shadows thrown by the flickering candle.

"Well?" I said impatiently. "Who is the boy, and where is he?"

"Never you mind that young, fellow. Let me tell you what I know. Then maybe we'll have time to go into things I don't know."

It was of no use to urge her. I bowed my assent to her terms.

"I'll name no names," she said. "My throat can be cut as quick as yours, and maybe quicker."

"The ones that has the boy means all right. They're rich. The ones as is looking for the boy has all wrong. They'll be rich if they gits him."

"How?"

"Why, I don't know," said Mother Borton. "I'm tellin' you what Henry Wilton told me."

This was maddening. I began to suspect that she knew nothing after all.

"Do you know where he is?" I asked, taking the questioning into my own hands.

"No"—sullenly.

"Who is protecting him?"

"I don't know."

"Who is trying to get him?"

"It's that snake-eyed Tom Terrill that's leading the hunt, along with Darby Meeker; but they ain't doing it for themselves."

"Is Doddridge Knapp behind them?"

The old woman looked at me suddenly in wild-eyed alarm.

"S-s-h!" she whispered. "Don't name no names."

"And is this all you know?" I asked in disappointment.

Mother Borton tried to remember some other point.

"I don't see how it's going to keep a knife from between my ribs," I complained.

"You keep out of the way of Tom Terrill and his hounds, and you'll be all right, I reckon."

"Am I supposed to be the dead man in this business?"

"Yes."

"Who are thy men?"

"There's Wilson and Fitzhugh and Porter and Brown," and she named ten or a dozen more.

"And what is Dicky?"

"It's a smart man as can put his finger on Dicky Nahl," said Mother Borton spitefully.

"Nahl is his name?"

"Yes. And I've seen him hobnob with Henry Wilton, and I've seen him thick as thieves with Tom Terrill, and which he's thickest with the devil himself couldn't tell. I call him Slippery Dicky."

"Why did he bring me here to-night?"

"I hearn there's orders come to change the place—the boy's place, you know. You was to tell 'em where the new one was to be, I reckon, but Tom Terrill spoiled things. He's lightning, is Tom Terrill. But I guess he got it all out of Dicky, though where Dicky got it the Lord only knows."

This was all that was to be had from Mother Borton. Either she knew no more, or she was sharp enough to hide a knowledge that might be dangerous, even fatal, to reveal. She was willing to serve me, and I was forced to let it pass that she knew no more.

"Well, I'd better be going then," said I at last. "It's nearly 4 o'clock, and everything seems to be quiet hereabouts. I'll find my way to my room."

"You'll do no such thing," said Mother Borton. "They've not given up the chase yet. Your men have gone home, I reckon, but I'll bet the saloon that you'd have a surprise before you got to the corner."

"Not a pleasant prospect," said I grimly.

"No. You must stay here. The room next to this one is just the thing for you. See?"

She drew me into the adjoining room, shading the candle as we passed through the hall that no gleam might fall where it would attract attention.

"You'll be safe here," she said. "Now do as I say. Go to sleep and git some rest. You ain't had much, I guess, since you got to San Francisco."

The room was cheerless, but in the circumstances the advice appeared good. I was probably safer here than in the room next to the rest.

"Good night," said my strange protectress. "You needn't git up till you git ready. This is a beautiful room—beautiful. I call it our bridal chamber, though we don't get no brides down here. There won't be no sun to bother your eyes in the mornin', for that window don't open up outside. So there can't nobody git in unless he comes from inside the house. There, git to bed. Look out you don't set fire to nothing. And put out the candle. Now good night, dearie."

Mother Borton closed the door behind her, and left me to the shadows.

There was nothing to be gained by sitting up, and the candle was past its final inch. I felt that I could not sleep, but I would lie down on the bed and rest my tired limbs, that I might refresh myself for the demands of the day. I kicked off my boots, put my revolver under my hand and lay down.

Heedless of Mother Borton's warning I left the candle to burn to the socket, and watched the flickering shadows chase each other over walls and ceiling, finally dropping off to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

In Which I Meet a Few Surprises.

I awoke with the sense of threatened danger strong in my mind. For a moment I was unable to recall where I was, or on what errand I had come. Then memory returned in a flood, and I sprang from the bed and peered about me.

A dim light struggled in from the darkened window, but no cause for apprehension could be seen. I was the only creature that breathed the air of that bleak and dingy room.

I drew aside the curtain, and threw up the window. It opened merely on a light-well, and the blank wall beyond gave back the cheery reflection of a patch of sunshine that fell at an angle from above.

The fresher air that crept in from the window cleared my mind, a dash of water refreshed my body and I was ready once more to face whatever might befall.

I looked at my watch. It was 8 o'clock, and I had slept four hours in this place. Truly, I had been imprudent after my adventure below. I had been right in trusting Mother Borton. Then I began to realize that I was outrageously hungry, and I remembered that I should be at the office by 9 to receive the commands of Doddridge Knapp, should he choose to send them.

I threw back the bolt, but when I tried to swing the door open it resisted my efforts. The key had been missing when I closed it, but a sliding bolt had fastened it securely. Now I saw that the door was locked.

Here was a strange perdicament. I had heard nothing of the noise of the key before I lost myself in slumber. Mother Borton must have turned it as an additional precaution as I slept. But how was I to get out? I hesitated to make a noise that could attract attention. It might bring some one less kindly disposed than my hostess of the night. But there was no other way. I was trapped, and must take the risk of summoning assistance.

I rapped on the panel and listened. No sound rewarded me. I rapped again more vigorously, but only silence followed. The house might have been the grave for all the signs of life it gave back.

There was something ominous about it. To be locked, thus, in a dark room of this house in which I had already been attacked, was enough to shake my spirit and resolution for the moment. What lay without the door, my apprehension asked me. Was it part of the plot to get the secret it was supposed I held? Had Mother Borton been murdered and the house seized? Or had Mother Borton played me false and was I now a prisoner to my own party for my enforced imposture, as one who knew too much to be left at large and too little to be of use? On a second and calmer thought it was evidently folly to bring my jailers about my ears, if jailers there were. I abandoned my half-formed plan of breaking down the door, and turned to the window and the light-well. Another window faced on the same space, not five feet away. If it were but opened I might swing myself over and through it; but it was closed, and a curtain hid the unknown possibilities and dangers of the interior. A dozen feet above was the roof, with no projection or foothold by which it might be reached. Below, the light-well ended in a tinned floor, about four feet from the window sill.

I swung myself down, and with two steps was trying the other window. It was unlocked. I raised the sash cautiously, but its creaking protest seemed to my excited ears to be loud enough to wake any but the dead. I stopped and listened after each squeak of the frame. There was no sign of movement.

Then I pushed aside the curtain cautiously, and looked within. The room appeared absolutely bare. Gaining confidence at the sight, I threw the curtain farther back, and with a bound climed in, revolver in hand.

The room was, as I had thought bare and deserted. There was a musty smell about it, as though it had not been opened for a long time, and dust and desolation lay heavy upon it.

There was, however, nothing here to linger for, and I hastened to try the door. It was locked. I stooped to examine the fastening. It was of the cheapest kind, attached to door and casement by small screws. With a good wrench it gave way, and I found myself in a dark side-hall between two rooms. Three steps brought me to the main hall, and I recognized it for the same through which I had felt my way in the darkness of the night.

I took my steps cautiously down the stairs, following the way that led to the side entrance. The saloon and restaurane room I was anxious to evade, for there would doubtless be a barkeeper and several loiterers about. It could not be avoided, however. As I neared the bottom of the stairs I heard the hum of voices from the hallway to the saloon, and that it was open.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Smoking Soldiers.

The experience of Lord Wolseley of the British army has been such that he has always made it a rule to allow, whenever possible, the soldiers under his command one pound of tobacco a month, which he considers a fair allowance, and with the use of which he finds the soldier does his best work. In Italy the military authorities recognize tobacco as one of the comforts essential to troops and cigars are served out to them with their daily rations.—Washington Herald.

CALEB POWERS FREE

GOV. WILLSON PARDONS HIM AND JAMES HOWARD.

PUTS END TO NOTED CASE

Executive Clemency Granted to Men Who Were Convicted of Complicity in Assassination of Goebel.

Frankfort, Ky.—By announcing the pardon Saturday of Caleb Powers and James Howard, Gov. Willson closed the last chapter in one of the most noted criminal cases in the history of this state, in which the people of all sections of the United States have formally expressed their interest by signing the petitions for pardon. Both were released from prison and went to their homes. In the closing days of January, eight years ago, while the contest of William Goebel for the gubernatorial seat occupied by William S. Taylor was being heard, Goebel was shot, dying later from his wound. The shot was believed to have come from a half-open window of the secretary of state's office and as Caleb Powers was then filling that position, suspicion was at once directed toward him and his arrest followed. Four times has Powers been put on trial for his life on the charge of complicity in the murder.

Many Setbacks for Powers.

The first three trials resulted in conviction and sentence, death being the penalty in two trials.

On the fourth trial, which came after the case had been carried to the United States court, being finally appealed to the supreme court, which turned it back to the state courts, the jury disagreed and thereupon the efforts for a pardon for Powers, as well as for James Howard, who had been convicted some years ago on charge of complicity, were renewed.

Gov. Willson Gives Reasons.

Gov. Willson gave out the following reasons for pardoning Caleb Powers and James B. Howard:

"Application has been made to the governor for the pardon of Caleb Powers, who stands charged by indictment, found in the Franklin circuit court and afterwards transferred on change of venue to the Scott circuit court, with the crime of being accessory before the fact to the willful murder of William Goebel. The application is supported by petitions recommending the pardon of the accused, signed by nearly 500,000 persons, some 240,000 Kentuckians, and a large proportion are Democrats. It is not likely that at any time during my term of office I shall be called upon to decide matters of graver importance than those presented by the applications for pardon of Caleb Powers and James B. Howard.

Anticipates Harsh Criticism.

"I realize that whatever my decision may be it will be harshly criticised. For more than eight years this group of cases has held the attention of the whole state and, indeed, of the whole country, as no cases in this state ever did before. The murder of Senator Goebel destroyed a remarkable life, brought the deepest grief to his family and thousands of friends who loved him; overthrew a whole state election, destroyed the peace and good feeling of the state for eight years, set neighbor against neighbor, made politics almost war, stained the good name of Kentucky and shocked the civilized world. There was and is no shadow of excuse or palliation for this base crime. There can be no mercy for any one guilty of the murder or of aiding or abetting it; but the more grave the crime, the more serious is the responsibility of deciding the question of guilt and the more imperative the duty of guarding against injustice and wrong imposed under the pressure of public excitement.

Says Release Is Popular Demand.

"I may say, that, in my judgment, after the fullest inquiry, the release of the accused from liability to further prosecution of the charge preferred against him is desired by the vast majority of the people of Kentucky without distinction as to party. The court of appeals has reversed three trials and conviction of Caleb Powers for errors against him. On the fourth trial, ten of the twelve jurors, members of both parties, voted for his acquittal and signed a petition for his pardon. Although the governor is authorized to pardon in advance of or without reference to the trial of a case, such power should never be exercised except under the most extraordinary circumstances. Honorable and friendly contests in our elections, and loyal and friendly support of the officers when elected according to our rules governing elections, shall at last make our contentions fair and reasonable instead of angry and hostile. Then we shall have made a great gain not only in the respect of the world but in the happiness and welfare of every man, woman and child in Kentucky."

Woman Drowns Herself.

Minneapolis, Minn.—Mrs. J. D. Tuthill of Brooklyn, N. Y., sister of J. S. Pomeroy, cashier of the Security National bank, Minneapolis, committed suicide by jumping into Lake Minnetonka at Breezy Point.

Miss Taft Wins Scholarship.

Washington.—Secretary Taft received information Tuesday that his young daughter, Helen Heron Taft, has won a Pennsylvania scholarship for the best entrance examination to Bryn Mawr college.

WOMAN'S BACKACHE

The back is the mainspring of woman's organism. It quickly calls attention to trouble by aching. It tells, with other symptoms, such as nervousness, headache, pains in the loins, weight in the lower part of the body, that a woman's feminine organism needs immediate attention.

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