BLIND FOLDED

By EARLE 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 make eyes, which sends a thrill through Dudley. Wilson postpones an explanation of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but occurrences cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. 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. He learns that there is a boy whom he is charged with secreting and protecting. Dudley, mistaken for Wilton, is employed by Knapp to assist in a stock brokerage deal. Giles Dudley finds himself closeted in a room with Mother Borton who makes a confidant of him. He can learn nothing about the mysterious boy further than that it is Tim Terrill and Darby Meeker who are after him. Dudley visits the home of Knapp and is stricken by the beauty of Luella, his daughter. Stumming tour through Chinatown is planned. The trip to Chinatown. Giles Dudley learns that the party is being shadowed by Terrill. Luella and Dudley are cut off from the rest of the party and imprisoned in a hallway behind an iron-bound door. Three Chinese ruffians approach the imprisoned couple. A battle ensues. One is knocked down. Giles begins firing. Tim Terrill is seen in the mob. A newly formed mob is checked by shots from Giles' revolver. Policeman Corson breaks down the door with an ax and the couple is rescued. Luella thanks Giles Dudley for saving her life. Knapp appears at the office with no trace of the previous night's debauch. Following his instructions Dudley has a notable day in the Stock Exchange, selling Crown Diamond and buying Omega, the object being to crush Decker, Knapp's hated rival. Dudley discovers that he loves Luella Knapp. Mother Borton tells Giles Dudley that "they've discovered where 'the boy' is." The mysterious unknown woman employer of Dudley meets him by appointment with "the boy," who is turned over to Dudley with his guards and they drive with him to the ferry boat to take a train out of the city. Dudley and his faithful guards convey "the boy" by train to the village of Livermore, as per the written instructions. The party is followed. Soon after the party is quartered in the hotel a special train arrives in Livermore. The "gang" including Darby Meeker and Tim Terrill, lay siege to the hotel and endeavor to capture "the boy," who comes forward to see the fight. "Tricked again," cries Tim Terrill, when he sees the youngster's face. "It's the wrong boy."

CHAPTER XXIV.

On the Road.

The wrong boy!

For a moment I could not understand nor believe; and when the meaning of the words came to me I groped in mental darkness. But there was no time for speculation. Half in a daze I heard a roar of curses, orders, a crash of glass as the lamp was extinguished, and over all came the prolonged growl of a wolf-voice, hoarse and shaken with anger. There was a vision of a wolf-head rising above the outline of faces a few yards away, dark, distorted, fierce, with eyes that blazed threats, and in an instant I found myself in the center of a struggling, shouting, swearing mass of savage men, fighting with naught but the instinct of blind rage. I doubt not that I was as crazy as the rest. But in my madness there was one idea strong in my mind. It was to reach the evil face and snake-eyes of Tom Terrill, and stamp the life out of him. With desperate rage I shouldered and fought till his white face with its venomous hatred was next to mine, till the fingers of my left hand gripped his throat, and my right hand tried to beat out his brains with a six-shooter.

"Damn you!" he gasped, striking fiercely at me. "I've been waiting for you!"

I tightened my grip and spoke no word. He writhed and turned, striving to free himself. I had knocked his revolver from his hand, and he tried in vain to reach it. A trace of fear stole into the venomous anger of the one eye that was unobscured, as he strove without success to guard himself from my blows. But he gave a sudden thrust, and with a sinuous writhe he was free, while I was carried back by the rush of men with the vague impression that something was amiss with me. Then a great light flamed up before me in which the struggling mob, the close hall and room, and the universe itself melted away, and I was alone.

The next impression that came to me was that of a voice from an immeasurable distance.

"He's coming to," is said; and then beside it I heard a strange wailing cry.

"What is it?" I asked, trying to sit up. My voice seemed to come from miles away and to belong to some other man.

"That's it, you're all right," said the voice encouragingly, and about the half of Niagara fell on my face.

Then the mists before my eyes cleared away, and I found that I was on the floor of the inner bedroom and Wainwright had emptied a water jug over me. The light of a small kerosene lamp gave a gloomy illumination to the place. Lockhart and Pitchugh leaned against the door, and Wilson bent with Wainwright over me. The boy was sitting on the bed, crying shrilly over the melancholy situation.

"What is it?" I asked, gathering my scattered wits. "What has happened?"

"We've been licked," said Wainwright regretfully. "The rest of the boys got took, but we got in here. Fitz and me seen the nasty knock you got, and dragged you back, and when we got you here the parlor was full of the hounds, and Porter and Abrams and Brown was missing. We found you was cut, and we've tried to fix you up."

I looked at my bandged arm, and put one more count in the indictment against Terrill. He had tried to stab me over the heart at the time he had wrenched free, but he had merely slashed my arm. It was not a severe wound, but it gave me pain.

"Only a scratch," said Wainwright.

I envied the philosophic calm with which he regarded it.

"It'll heal," I returned shortly. "Where is the other gang? Are they gone?"

"No; there's half a dozen of 'em out in the parlor, I reckon."

"You'd better tell him," said Pitchugh, shifting an unpleasant task.

"Well," said Wainwright, "we heard orders given to shoot the first man that comes out before morning, but before all to kill you if you sticks your nose outside before sun-up."

The amiable intentions of the victors set me to thinking. If it was important to keep here till morning, it must be important to me to get out. There was no duty to keep here, for I need fear no attack on the boy who was with us. I looked at my watch, and found it was near 1 o'clock.

"Tie those blankets together," I ordered, as soon as I was able to get my feet.

The men obeyed me in silence, while Wainwright vainly tried to quiet the child. I was satisfied to have him cry, for the more noise he made the less our movements would be heard. I had a plan that I thought might be carried out.

While the others were at work, I cautiously raised the window and peered through the shutters. The rain was falling briskly, and the wind still blew a gale. I thought I distinguished the dark figure of a man on guard within a few feet of the building, and my heart sank.

"How many are in the parlor, Wilson?" I asked.

Wilson applied his eye to the keyhole.

"Can't see anybody but that one-eyed fellow, Broderick, but there might be more."

A flash of memory came to me, and I felt in my pocket for Mother Borton's mysterious scrawl. "Give that to a one-eyed man," she had said. It was a forlorn hope, but worth the trying.

"Hand this to Broderick," I said, "as soon as you can do it without anyone's seeing you."

Wilson did not like the task, but he took the envelope and silently brought the door ajar. His first investigations were evidently reassuring, for he soon had half his body outside.

"He's got it," he said on reappearing.

A little later there was a gentle tap at the door, and the head of the one-eyed man was thrust in.

"It's as much as my life's worth," he whispered. "What do you want me to do?"

"How many men are in the street below here?"

"There's one, but more are in call." And he had to show the constable and the landlord and some others the warrant, too."

"How many were hurt?"

"Six or seven. Two of your fellows looked pretty bad when they were carried out."

We turned down a by-street, but as soon as the guard had disappeared we retraced our steps and hastened to the Thatcher stables.

The rain was whipped into our faces as we beat against the wind, and the whish and roar of the gale among the trees and the rattle of loose boards and tins, as they were tossed and shaken behind the houses, gave a melancholy accompaniment to our hasty march.

We nearly missed the stable in the darkness, and it was several minutes before we roused Thatcher to a state in which he could put together the two ideas that we wanted to get in, and that it was his place to get up and let us in.

"Horses to-night?" he gasped, throwing up his hands. "Holy Moses! I couldn't think of letting the worst plug of the lot out in this storm."

"Well, I want your best."

"You'll have to do it, Dick," said Fitzhugh with a few words of explanation. "He'll make it all right for you."

"Where are you going?" asked Thatcher.

"Oakland."

He threw up his hands once more.

"Great Scott! you can't do it. The horses can't travel 50 miles at night and in this weather. You'd best wait for the morning train. The express will be through here before 5."

"I hesitated a moment, but the chances of being stopped were too great.

"I must go," I said decidedly. "I can't wait here."

"I have it," said Thatcher. "By hard riding you can get to Niles in time to catch the freight as it goes up from San Jose. It will get down in time for the first boat, if that's what you want."

"Good! How far is it?"

"We call it 18 miles—it's over that by the road. There's only one nasty bit. That's in the canyon."

"I think we shall need the pleasure of your company," I said.

"It's a bad job, but if you must, you must," he groaned. And he soon had three horses under the saddle.

I eyed the beasts with some disfavor. They were evidently half-mustang, and I thought undersized for such a journey. But I was to learn before the night was out the virtues of strength and endurance that lie in the blood of the Indian horse.

"Fitz! What's that?" said Fitzhugh, extinguishing the light.

The voices of the storm and the uneasy champing of the horses were the only sounds that rewarded a minute's listening.

"We must chance it," said I, after looking cautiously into the darkness and finding no signs of a foe.

And in a moment more we were galloping down the street, the hoof-beats scarcely sounding in the softened earth of the roadway. Not a word was spoken after the start as we turned through the side street to avoid the approaches to the hotel. Thatcher suddenly turned to the west, and in another minute we were on the open highway, with the steady beat of the horses' hoofs splashing a wild rhythm on the muddy road.

With the town once behind us, I felt my spirits rise with every stroke of the horse's hoofs beneath me. The rain and the wind were friends rather than foes. Yet my arm pained me sharply, and I was forced to carry the reins in the whip hand. Here the road was broader, and we rode three abreast, silent, watchful, each busy with his own thought, and all alert for the signs of chase behind.

"There!" said Thatcher, suddenly pulling his horse up to a walk. "We're five miles out, and they've got a big piece to make up if they're on our track. We'll breathe the horses a bit."

The beasts were panting a little, but chafed at the bits as we walked them and tossed their heads uneasily to the pelting of the storm.

"Hark!" I cried. "Did you hear that?" I was almost certain that the sound of a faint halloo came from behind us. I was not alone in the thought.

"The dera fools!" said Fitzhugh. "They want a long chase, I guess, to go through the country yelling like a pack of wild Injuns."

"I reckon 'twas an owl," said Thatcher; "but we might as well be moving. We needn't take no chances while we've got a good set of heels under us. Get up, boys."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

I TIGHTENED MY GRIP AND SPOKE NO WORD

GOOD THING TO LEAVE ALONE.

Physicians Advice to Those Who Are Fond of Mushrooms.

It may be possible that when all the boys are dead they will quit eating toadstools and dying in spasms therefrom. The edible and poisonous varieties of these fungi are too close together in general and species for the average youngster to differentiate them. It continues, after many years, to be the same old story: Eat it; if it kills you it is a toadstool; if it agrees with you it is a mushroom. Some years ago the department of agriculture at Washington issued an elaborate and beautiful set of illustrations of mushrooms and "near" mushrooms, labeling one set "edible" and the other "poisonous." The story leaked out that the printers got the labels mixed and that the transposition was not discovered until the work had been sent broadcast. The officials did some tall hustling in an effort to call in the issue. A well-known physician said to me the other day: "Owing to the very great difficulty in ordinary life of detecting the true from the false my mushroom advice has usually been 'let both kinds alone.'"—New York Press.

Parish Registers.

I was once being shown round a village church in the Eastern Counties, and was solemnly informed by the somewhat garrulous parish clerk that the registers went back to the time of William the Conqueror, says J. F. Williams in The Treasury. Lest the same startling opinion may be held by others, let me hasten to say that parish registers were unknown in England before the end of Henry VIII's reign, and happy is that parish which still possesses its records even from that date. For our earlier registers have certainly had a very checkered career, and when we read the story of the treatment which has been meted out to them during the three or four centuries of their existence, we can only wonder that they exist in such numbers as they do.

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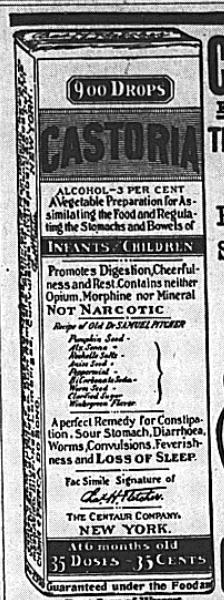
The first steamer that ever crossed the Atlantic took twenty-four days to make the trip, and the early boats of the Cunard line, organized in 1840, made the transatlantic trip in four teen days, or in about the same time as the best of the clippers of the Black Ball and other lines. In 1860 the sailing ship Dreadnought made the passage in nine days and seven teen hours, and it was a long time before a steamer beat that record. It is nearly two decades since the five-day ship came upon the scene, and ever since then the record has been lowered by hours rather than by days.



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"Yes."

"How was it?"

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"What's that?"

"I wish I had waited until next month to take it."

"Why?"

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