

# The Blind Man's Eyes

(Continued from page 18.)

and it was during this trial that Santoine's name had become more publicly known. Not that the blind man was suspected of any knowledge—much less of any complicity—in the crime; the murder had been because of a purely private matter; but in the eager questioning into Latron's circumstances and surroundings previous to the crime, Santoine was summoned into court as a witness.

The drama of Santoine's examination had been of the sort the public—and therefore the newspapers—love. The blind man, led into the court, sitting sightless in the witness chair, revealing himself by his spoken, and even more by his withheld, replies as one of the unknown guiders of the destiny of the Continent and as counselor to the most powerful,—himself till then hardly heard of but plainly one of the nation's "uncrowned rulers,"—had caught the public sense. The fate of the murderer, the crime, even Latron himself, lost temporarily their interest in the public curiosity over the personality of Santoine. So, ever since, Santoine had been a man marked out; his goings and comings, beside what they might actually reveal of disagreements or settlements among the great, were the object of unfounded and often disturbing guesses and speculations; and particularly at this time when the circumstances of Warden's death had proclaimed dissensions among the powerful which they had hastened to deny, it was natural that Santoine's comings and goings should be as inconspicuous as possible.

It had been reported for some days that Santoine had come to Seattle directly after Warden's death; but when this was admitted, his associates had always been careful to add that Santoine, having been a close personal friend of Gabriel Warden, had come purely in a personal capacity, and the impression was given that Santoine had returned quietly some days before. The mere prolonging of his stay in the West was more than suggestive that affairs among the powerful were truly in such state as Warden had proclaimed; this attack upon Santoine, so similar to that which had slain Warden, and delivered within eleven days of Warden's death, must be of the gravest significance.

CONNERY stood overwhelmed for the moment with this fuller recognition of the seriousness of the disaster which had come upon this man entrusted to his charge; then he turned to the surgeon.

"Can you do anything for him here, Doctor?" he asked.

The surgeon glanced down the car. "That state-room—is it occupied?"

"It's occupied by his daughter."

"We'll take him in there, then. Is the berth made?"

The conductor went to the rear of the car and brought the porter who had been stationed there, with the brakeman. He set the negro to making up the berth; and when it was finished, the four men lifted the inert figure of Basil Santoine, carried it into the drawing-room and laid it on its back upon the bed.

"I have my instruments," Sinclair said. "I'll get them; but before I decide to do anything, I ought to see his daughter. Since she is here, her consent is necessary before any operation on him."

The surgeon spoke to Avery. Eaton saw by Avery's start of recollection that Harriet Dorne's—or Harriet Santoine's—friend could not have been thinking of her at all during the recent moments. The chances of life or death of Basil Santoine evidently so greatly and directly affected Donald Avery that he had been absorbed in them to the point of forgetting all other interests than his own. Eaton's Had Connery in his directions said anything to the trainmen guarding the door or to the passengers on the platforms, that had frightened her here? When the first sense of something wrong spread back to the obser-

vation car, what word had reached her? Did she connect it with her father? Was she—the one most closely concerned—among those who had been on the rear platform seeking admittance? Was she standing there in the aisle of the next car waiting for confirmation of her dread? Or had no word reached her, and must the news of the attack upon her father come to her with all the shock of suddenness?

Eaton had been about to leave the car, where he now was plainly of no use, but these doubts checked him.

"Miss Santoine is in the observation car," Avery said. "I'll get her."

The tone was in some way false—Eaton could not tell exactly how. Avery started down the aisle.

"One moment, please, Mr. Avery!" said the conductor. "I'll ask you not to tell Miss Santoine before any other passengers that there has been an attack upon her father. Wait until you get her inside the door of this car."

"You yourself said nothing, then, that can have made her suspect it?" Eaton asked.

CONNERY shook his head; the conductor, in doubt and anxiety over exactly what action the situation called for,—unable, too, to communicate any hint of it to his superiors to the West because of the wires being down,—clearly had resolved to keep the attack upon Santoine secret for the time. "I said nothing definite even to the trainmen," he replied; "and I want you gentlemen to promise me before you leave this car that you will say nothing until I give you leave."

His eyes shifted from the face of one to another, until he had assured himself that all agreed. As Avery left the car, Eaton found a seat in one of the end sections near the drawing-room. Sinclair and the conductor had returned to Santoine. The porter was unmaking the berth in the next section which Santoine had occupied, having been told to do so by Connery; the negro bundled together the linen and carried it to the cupboard at the further end of the car; he folded the blankets and put them in the upper berth; he took out the partitions and laid them on top of the blankets. Eaton stared out the window at the bank of snow. He did not know whether to ask to leave the car, or whether he ought to remain; and he would have gone except for recollection of Harriet Santoine. He had heard the rear door of the car open and close some moments before, so he knew that she must be in the car and that, in the passage at that end, Avery must be telling her about her father. Then the curtain at the end of the car was pushed further aside, and Harriet Santoine came in.

She was very pale, but quite controlled, as Eaton knew she would be. She looked at Eaton, but did not speak as she passed; she went directly to the door of the drawing-room, opened it and went in, followed by Avery. The door closed, and for a moment Eaton could hear voices inside the room—Harriet Santoine's, Sinclair's, Connery's. The conductor then came to the door of the drawing-room and sent the porter for water and clean linen; Eaton heard the rip of linen being torn, and the car became filled with the smell of antiseptics.

Donald Avery came out of the drawing-room and dropped into the seat across from Eaton. He seemed deeply thoughtful—so deeply, indeed, as to be almost unaware of Eaton's presence. And Eaton, observing him, again had the sense that Avery's absorption was completely in consequences to himself of what was going on behind the door—in how Basil Santoine's death or continued existence would affect the fortunes of Donald Avery.

"Is he going to operate?" Eaton asked.

"Operate? Yes; he's doing it," Avery replied shortly.

"And Miss Santoine?"

"She's helping—handing instruments and so on."

Avery could not have replied, as he did, if the strain this period must impose upon Harriet Santoine had been much in his mind. Eaton turned from him and asked nothing more. A long time passed—how long, Eaton could not have told; he noted only that during it the shadows on the snowbank outside the window appreciably changed their position. Once during this time, the door of the drawing-room was briefly opened, while Connery handed something out to the porter, and the smell of the antiseptics grew suddenly stronger; and Eaton could see behind Connery the surgeon, coatless and with shirt-sleeves rolled up, bending over the figure on the bed. Finally the door opened again, and Harriet Santoine came out, paler than before, and now not quite so steady.

Eaton rose as she approached them; and Avery leaped up, all concern and sympathy for her immediately she appeared. He met her in the aisle and took her hand.

"Was it successful, dear?" Avery asked.

She shut her eyes before she answered, and stood holding to the back of a seat; then she opened her eyes, saw Eaton and recognized him and sat down in the seat where Avery had been sitting.

"Dr. Sinclair says we will know in four or five days," she replied to Avery; she turned then directly to Eaton. "He thought there probably was a clot under the skull, and he operated to find it and relieve it. There was one, and we have done all we can; now we may only wait. Dr. Sinclair has appointed himself nurse; he says I can help him, but not just yet. I thought you would like to know."

"Thank you; I did want to know," Eaton acknowledged. He moved away from them, and sat down in one of the seats further down the car. Connery came out from the drawing-room, went first to one end of the car, then to the other; and returning with the Pullman conductor, began to oversee the transfer of the baggage of all other passengers than the Santoine party to vacant sections in the forward sleepers. People began to pass through the aisle; evidently the car doors had been unlocked. Eaton got up and left the car, finding at the door a porter from one of the other cars stationed to warn people not to linger or speak or make other noises in going through the car where Santoine was.

As the door was closing behind Eaton, a sound came to his ears from the car he just had left—a young girl suddenly crying in abandon. Harriet Santoine, he understood, must have broken down for the moment, after the strain of the operation; and Eaton halted as though to turn back, feeling the blood drive suddenly upon his heart. Then, recollecting that he had no right to go to her, he went on.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Suspicion Fastens on Eaton.

AS he entered his own car, Eaton halted; that part of the train had taken on its usual look and manner, or as near so, it seemed, as the stoppage in the snow left possible. Knowing what he did, Eaton stared at first with astonishment; and the irrational thought came to him that the people before him were acting. Then he realized that they were almost as usual because they did not know what had happened; the fact that Basil Santoine had been attacked—or that he was on the train—still had been carefully kept secret by the spreading of some other explanation of the trouble in the car behind. So now, in their section, Amy and Constance were reading and knitting; their parents had immersed themselves in double solitaire; the Englishman looked out the window at the snow with no different expression than that with which he would have surveyed a landscape they might have been passing. Sinclair's section, of course, remained empty; and a porter came and transferred the surgeon's handbag and overcoat to the car behind in which he was caring for Santoine.

Eaton found his car better filled than it had been before, for the people shifted from the car behind had been



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