

listening. There was no alarm of any sort. He crept along beside the house till he came to the first windows of the south wing. He tried these carefully and then went on. He gained the south corner of the wing, unobserved or at least without sign that he had been seen, and went on around it.

He stopped at the first high French window on the south. It was partly hidden from view from south and west by a column of the portico, and was the one he had selected for his operations; as he tried to slip his jimmy under the bottom of the sash, the window, to his amazement, opened silently upon its hinges; it had not been locked. The heavy curtain within hung just in front of him; he put out his hand and parted them. Then he started back in astonishment and crouched close to the ground; inside the room was a man moving about, flashing an electric torch before him and then exploring an instant in darkness and flashing his torch again.

The unexpectedness of this sight took for an instant Eaton's breath and power of moving; he had not been at all prepared for this; now he knew suddenly that he ought to have been prepared for it. If the man within the room was not the one who had attacked him with the motor, he was closely allied with that man, and what he was after now was the same thing Eaton was after. Eaton looked about behind him; no one apparently had been left on watch outside. He drew his pistol, and loosing the safety, he made it ready to fire; with his left hand, he clung to the short, heavy jimmy. He stepped into the great room through the curtains, taking care they did not jingle the rings from which they hung; he carefully let the curtains fall together behind him, and treading noiselessly in his stocking feet, he advanced upon the

man, moving forward in each period of darkness between the flashes of the electric torch.

The man, continuing to flash his light about, plainly had heard nothing, and the curtains had prevented him from being warned by the chill of the night air that the window was open; but now, at the further side of the room, another electric torch flashed out. Another man had been in the room; he neither alarmed nor was alarmed by the man flashing the first light; each had known the other's presence before. There were at least two men in the room, working together—or rather, one was working, the other supervising; for Eaton heard now a steady, almost inaudible grinding noise as the second man worked. Eaton halted again and waited; if there were two, there might be others.

The discovery of the second man had not made Eaton afraid; his pulses were beating faster and hotter, and he felt the blood rushing to his head and his hands growing cold with his excitement; but he was conscious of no fear. He crouched and crept forward noiselessly again. No other light appeared in the room, and there was no sound elsewhere from the darkness; but the man who supervised had moved closer to the other. The grinding noise had stopped; it was followed by a sharp click; the men, side by side, were bending over something; and the light of the man who had been working, for a fraction of a second shot into the face of the other. It did not delay at all; it was a purely accidental flash and could not have been said to show the features at all—only a posture, an expression, a personality of a strong cruel man. He muttered some short, hoarse imprecation at the other; but before Eaton heard the voice, he had stopped as if struck, and his breath had gone from him.

(To be Continued.)

The Dish and the Spoon

(Continued from page 9.)

"I tell you, Jim," I cried, with all the earnestness at my command, "the man's a thief, a criminal with a criminal's record!"

"Then prove it!" demanded Jim.

"Call him in and I will."

Van Tuyl made a motion for his wife to touch the bell.

Her slippered toe was still on the rug-covered button when Wilkins entered, the same austere and self-assured figure.

"Wilkins," said Van Tuyl, and there was an outspoken and deliberate savagery in his voice even as his wife motioned to him in what seemed a signal for moderation, "Wilkins, I regard you as an especially good servant. Mr. Kerfoot, on the other hand, says he knows you and says you are not."

"Yes, sir," said Wilkins with his totem-pole abstraction.

There was something especially maddening in that sustained calmness of his.

"And what's more," I suddenly cried, exasperated by that play-acting role and rising and confronting him as he stood there, "your name's not Wilkins, and you never got that wrist scar from a coach door."

"Why not, sir?" he gently and respectfully inquired.

"Because," I cried, stepping still nearer and watching the immobile blue-white face, "in the gang you work with you're known as Sir Henry, and you got that cut on the wrist from a wedge when you tried to blow open a safe door, and the letters of introduction which you brought to the Whipsy Club were forged by an expert named Turk McMeekin; and I know what brought you into this house and what your plans for robbing it are!"

THERE was not a move of his black-clad body as he stood there. There was not one twitch of the mask-like face. But out on that face, point by

point, came a slow suffusion of something akin to expression. It was not fear. To call it fear would be doing the man an injustice. It began with the eyes, and spread from feature to feature, very much, I imagine, as sentient life must have spread across the countenance of Pygmalion's slowly awakening marble.

For one fraction of a moment the almost pitiful eyes looked at me with a quick and imploring glance. Then the mask once more descended over them. He was himself again. And I felt almost sure that in the mellowed light about us the other two figures at the table had not seen that face as I did.

There was, in fact, something almost like shame on Van Tuyl's heavy face as the calm-voiced servant, utterly ignoring me and my words, turned to him and asked if he should remove the things.

"You haven't answered the gentleman," said Beatrice Van Tuyl, in a voice a little shrill with excitement.

"What is there to answer, madam?" he mildly asked. "It's all the young gentleman's foolishness, some foolishness which I can't understand."

"But the thing can't stand like this," protested the ponderous Van Tuyl.

There must have been something reassuring to them both in the methodic calmness with which this calumniated factor in their domestic Eden moved about once more performing his petty domestic duties.

"Then you deny everything he says?" insisted the woman.

The servant stopped and looked up in mild reproof.

"Of course, madam," he replied, as he slowly removed the liqueur glasses. I saw my hostess look after him with one of her long and abstracted glances. She was still peering into his face as he stepped back to the table. She was, indeed, still gazing at him when

the muffled shrill of an electric bell announced there was a caller at the street door.

"Wilkins," she said, almost ruminatively, "I want you to answer the door—the street door."

"Yes, madam," he answered, without hesitation.

THE three of us sat in silence, as the slow and methodic steps crossed the room, stepped out into the hall, and advanced to what at least one of us knew to be his doom. It was Van Tuyl himself who spoke up out of the silence.

"What's up?" he asked. "What's he gone for?"

"The police are there," answered his wife.

"Good God!" exclaimed the astounded husband, now on his feet. "You don't mean you've sprung that trap on the poor devil? You—"

"Sit down, Jim," broke in his wife with enforced calmness. "Sit down and wait."

"But I won't be made a fool of!"

"You're not being made a fool of!"

"But who's arresting this man? Who's got the evidence to justify what's being done here?"

"I have," was the woman's answer.

"What do you mean?"

She was very calm about it.

"I mean that Witter was right. My Baroda pearls and the emerald pendant were not in the safe. They're gone."

"They're gone?" echoed the incredulous husband.

"Listen," I suddenly cried, as Van Tuyl sat digesting his discovery. We heard the sound of steps, the slam of a door, and then the departing hum of a motor car. Before I realized what she was doing Beatrice Van Tuyl's foot was once more on the call bell. A footman answered the summons.

"Go to the street door," she commanded, "and see who's there."

We waited, listening. The silence lengthened. Something about that silence impressed me as ominous. We were still intently listening as the footman stepped back into the room.

"It's the chauffeur, sir," he explained.

"And what does he want?"

"He said Felice telephoned for the car a quarter of an hour ago."

"Send Felice to me," commanded my hostess.

"I don't think I can, ma'am. She's gone in the car with Wilkins."

"With Wilkins?"

"Yes, ma'am. Jansen says he can't make it out, ma'am, Wilkins driving off that way without so much as a by-your-leave, ma'am."

The three of us rose as one from the table. For a second or two we stood staring at each other.

Then Van Tuyl suddenly dived for the stairs, with the napkin full of jewelry in his hand. I, in turn, dived for the street door. But before I opened it I knew it was too late.

I suddenly stepped back into the hallway, to confront Beatrice Van Tuyl.

"How long have you had Felice?" I asked, groping impotently about the hall closet for my hat and coat.

"She came two weeks before Wilkins," was the answer.

"Then you see what this means?" I asked, still groping about for my overcoat.

"What can it mean?"

"They were working together—they were confederates."

Van Tuyl descended the stairs still carrying the table napkin full of jewelry. His eyes were wide with indignant wonder.

"It's gone!" he gasped. "He's taken your box!"

I emerged from the hall closet both a little startled and a little humiliated.

"Yes, and he's taken my hat and coat," I sadly confessed.

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