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THE CARLETON PLACE HERALD.

7

Gordon Craig SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

By RANDALL PARRISH
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I felt the pistol in my pocket, took it out and made sure it was in readiness, then advanced cautiously toward the house. The hall was empty and so was the front room. The latter appeared desolate and grim in its disorder and dirt. My thought centered on that picture of Judge Henley hanging against the further wall. I could never be satisfied until I learned absolutely what was concealed behind that heavy gilded frame. There was mystery to this house, and perhaps here I had already stumbled upon the secret. I opened the door leading to the rear, silently, and listened. There were voices talking at a distance, two women, one a pleasant contralto, the other cracked and high pitched. The lady was doing her part; I must do mine. I closed the door gently and stole over toward the picture.

A black haircloth sofa with broad mahogany arm offered two easy steps, enabling me to tip the heavy frame sufficiently so as to peer behind. The one glance was sufficient. Underneath was an opening in the wall much less in width than the picture, yet ample for the passage of a crouched body. The arm of the sofa made egress comparatively easy, while the frame of the picture, though appearing heavy and substantial, was in reality of light wood and presented no obstacle to an active man. The passage was black, and I thrust my head and shoulders in, striving to discern something of its nature. For possibly three feet I could trace the floor, but beyond that point it seemed to disappear into impenetrable darkness. This line of change was so distinct that I surmised at once it marked a descent to a lower level, either by ladder or stairs.

CHAPTER IX.

A Chamber of Horrors.
THERE was no hesitancy as to what I must do. Now that I had discovered this secret passage it must be thoroughly explored. The safest way was to burrow through the dark, trusting to hands and feet for safety and prepared for any encounter. Whoever might be hidden away there would certainly possess some light, sufficient for any warning I needed.

Standing on the sofa arm I found little difficulty in pressing my body forward into the aperture until extending at full length the picture settled noiselessly back into place against the wall, excluding all light. Inch by inch I worked forward, anxiously exploring for the break in the floor, which I knew to be only a few feet distant. Even then I reached it unaware of its proximity, experiencing a sudden unpleasant shock as my extended hand groped about, touching nothing tangible.

I was some time determining the exact nature of what was before me. There were no stairs, nor did any shafts of a ladder protrude above the floor level. Only as I lay flat and felt cautiously across from wall to wall could I determine what lay below. All was black as a well, as noiseless as a grave, yet there was a ladder exactly fitting the space solidly into the flooring. My groping fingers could reach two of the rungs, and they felt sound and strong. With face outward I trusted myself to their support and began the descent slowly, pausing between each step to listen and gripping the side bars tightly. The blackness and silence, combined with what I anticipated discovering somewhere in those depths below, set my nerves tingling, yet I felt cool and determined to press on. Especially did I yearn to learn something definite about Philip Henley. This to me was now the one matter of importance—to be assured that he was living or dead.

I counted twelve rungs going down and then felt stone flags beneath my feet, although the walls on either side, as I explored them with my hands, were still of closely matched wood. The passage, now high enough to permit of my standing erect, led toward the rear of the house, presenting no obstacle other than darkness, until I came up suddenly against a heavy wooden door, completely barring further progress. As near as I could figure I must be already directly beneath the kitchen and close in against the south wall. No sound reached me, however, from above, nor could I, with ear against the slight crack, distinguish any movement beyond the barrier. Cautious fingering revealed closely matched hard wood, studded thickly with nail heads, but no keyhole or latch. Secure in the feeling that no one else could be in this outer passage, and completely baffled, I ventured to strike a match. The tiny yellow flame, ere it quickly flickered out in some mysterious draft, revealed an iron band to the left of the door, with slight protuberance, resembling the button of an electric bell.

Almost convinced that the pressure of my finger would ring an electric bell I pressed the metal button. To my surprise and relief, the only thing to occur was the slow opening of the door inward, a dim gleam of light becoming visible through the widening crack. I peered anxiously into the dimly revealed interior. It was a basement room, half the width of the kitchen

overhead, I should judge; the walls of crude masonry, the floor of brick, the ceiling, festooned by cobwebs, of rough hewn beams. The light, flickering and dim, came from a half burned candle in an iron holder screwed against the wall, revealing a small table, two chairs, one without a back, and four narrow sleeping berths made of rough boards. This was all, except a coat hanging from a beam and a small mud hatchet lying on the floor. There was, in the instant I had to view these things, no semblance of movement or suggestion of human presence. Assured of this, although holding myself alert and ready, I slipped through the opening. Even as I stood there, gasping and staring about, a sharp draft of air extinguished the candle, and I heard the snap of the lock as the door behind blew back into position. About me was the black silence of a grave.

I backed against the wall, crouching low, weapon in hand, scarcely venturing to breathe, listening intently for the slightest sound to break the intense silence. There must be another opening into this underground den—one leading to the outer air—judging from that sudden and powerful suction. The very atmosphere I breathed had a freshness to it, inconceivable in such a place otherwise. That sudden sweep of air could only have originated in the opening of some other barrier—a door, no doubt, leading directly to the outside. I had seen no occupant of the room. Without question it was deserted at my entrance. Yet some one had been there, and not long before, as was evidenced by the burning candle. Nor, by that same token, did this same mysterious party expect to be absent for any length of time. Apparently I had intruded at the very moment of his departure. Wherever that second passage might be, the former occupant of this underground den had evidently entered it previous to my opening the inner door. Still unaware of my presence, he had unfastened some other barrier, and the reluctant draft had extinguished the candle and blown shut the door at my back. This seemed so clearly the truth that I laughed grimly behind clinched teeth. The solution was easy. I had but to discover the extinguished candle, relight it, search out the second passage and waylay the fellow when he returned unsuspecting of danger.

My groping search for the candle was finally rewarded by touch of the iron brace. I could clearly trace the form of the bracket and determine how it was fastened into place, yet to my astonishment, there was no remnant of candle remaining in the empty socket. Grease, still warm to the touch, proved conclusively that I had attained the right spot in my search, yet the candle itself had disappeared. Beyond doubt the draft of air had been sufficiently strong to dislodge it from the shallow socket, and it had fallen to the floor. I felt about on hands and knees, but without result, and finally, in sheer desperation, struck my last match. The tiny flare was sufficient to reveal the entire floor space as well as the wall, but there was no remnant of candle visible. I held the sliver of wood, until the flame scorched my fingers, staring about in bewilderment. Then the intense darkness shut me in.

I crouched back to the wall, pistol in hand, and it seemed as though the blood in my veins had turned to ice. How could the candle have vanished so completely? There was but one way to account for this occurrence—some human, aware of my presence, had removed the candle, had stolen through the pitch darkness silently and as swiftly disappeared. I was locked in, trapped, and not alone!

I confess for an instant I was panic stricken, shrinking back from the horror of the black unknown which enveloped me. I could see and hear nothing, yet I seemed to feel a ghastly presence skulking behind that impenetrable veil. My first inclination was to creep back to the door and escape into the outer passage. Yet pride restrained me, pride quickly supplemented by a return of courage. I straightened up and advanced slowly, testing the wall with my hand, every muscle stiffened for action, listening for the slightest sound. I encountered nothing, heard nothing, until my groping fingers touched the rough plank of a sleeping berth. I explored this cautiously, lifting the edge of a coarse blanket and reaching up to make sure the one above was also unoccupied. Satisfied that both were empty, I worked my way blindly along to the second tier. As I reached into the lower of the two bunks my finger came in contact with some substance that left the impression of a human body beneath the blanket. I jerked away, startled, expecting my light touch would arouse the occupant. There was no movement, however, nor could I distinguish any sound of breathing.

Convinced I had been mistaken, I reached in once more to assure myself of the truth, and my hand touched cold, clammy flesh. The shock of discovery sent me reeling backward. It was not the dead body so much as the black gloom which robbed me of manhood. I could not see where to go, how to escape. At whatever cost I must procure light. Shaking as with palsy, yet with teeth clinched, I reached forward, groping my way back to the side of the bunk. I touched the edge of the blanket and thrust it away, feeling the body. The man was fully dressed, lying upon his back, and I experienced no difficulty in attaining the pockets of his coat. In the third I found what I sought—a box of matches.

I struck one and as the phosphorus head burst into flame stared about the vacant room and then down into the dead face with the bunk. The man

hatchet and was almost unrecognizable. Not until the blazing match had burned to my finger tips was I sure of his identity. Then, to my added horror, I recognized Coombs. I grasped the full significance of the man's death, the probable reason for his being stricken down. Whoever had been hidden behind that picture, crouching in the passage, had overheard his confession to me. This was vengeance wreaked upon a traitor, the executed death sentence of desperate men. And it had just been carried out—within the hour. The murderers might be even now looking within the shadows watching my every motion.

Again a slender match flared into tiny flame, casting about a dim radius of light, partially reassuring me that I was alone. Before it flickered out into darkness my eyes made two discoveries—the opening of a dark passage to the left of the bunks and a ghastly hand protruding from the upper berth.

Above the murdered Coombs, hidden beneath blankets, was the body of the



To My Added Horror I Recognized Coombs.

strange man shot in the upper room. The place was a charnel house, a spot accursed. I crept back from that ghastly scene of death as though invisible hands gripped my throat. I fairly choked with the unutterable horror which overcame me. And yet I knew I must act, must go on to the end. Even as I crouched there, trembling and unmanned, seeing visions in the darkness, hearing imaginary sounds, my thoughts leaped back to the girl upstairs. I could feel the courage returning, the leap of hot blood through my veins as I straightened up.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The prize optimist is the man who advocates the singing of grand opera in English on the theory that it would then be possible to understand the words.

There is an exceptional taxicab driver in Paris. He has inherited a fortune of \$1,000,000. Usually the fortune is exacted from the unhappy customers.

There are few people to keep up the hunt for pirate gold, but there are a number of pirates of various kinds who are constantly on the lookout for the people's coin.

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Chesterville, Ont.—“I heard your medicines highly praised, and a year ago I began taking them for falling of womb and ovarian trouble.

“My left side pained me all the time and just before my periods which were irregular and painful it would be worse. To sit down caused me pain and suffering and I would be so nervous sometimes that I could not bear to see any one or hear any one speak. Little specks would float before my eyes and I was always constipated.

“I cannot say too much for Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Liver Pills, for there are no medicines like them. I have taken them and I recommend them to all women. You may publish this testimonial.”—Mrs. STEPHEN J. MARTIN, Chesterville, Ontario, Canada.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson XII.—Fourth Quarter, For
Dec. 19, 1915.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Luke ii, 8-20.
Memory Verses, 13, 14—Golden Text,
Luke ii, 10—Commentary Prepared by
Rev. D. M. Stearns.

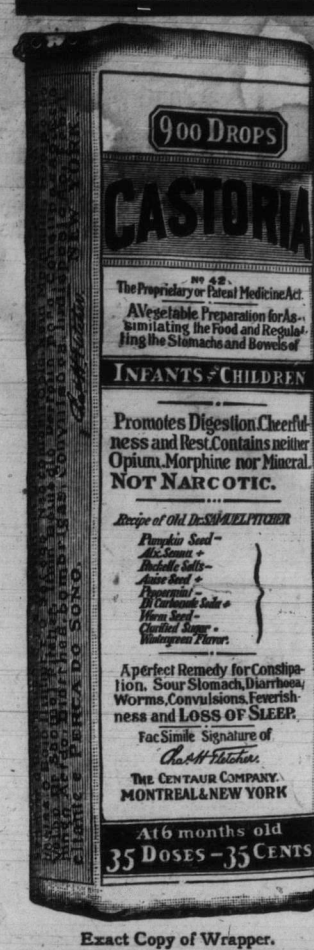
The regular lesson in II Kings xviii tells of the consummation of Israel's sin under Hosea, their last king, until the Lord removed them out of His sight. There was none left but the tribe of Judah only (xviii, 18). Judah also kept not the commandments of the Lord, but sinned more and more, with but few exceptions as to their kings, until they, too, were carried into captivity (xviii, 19; II Chron. xxxvi, 15-19). It is refreshing to turn from such a record to the story of the birth of their long promised Messiah, of whom it was foretold that He would be born of a virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, of the line of David (Isa. vii, 14; ix, 6, 7; Mic. v, 2). So it came to pass that “When the fullness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law” (Gal. iv, 4, 5).

God moved the world by a decree from the ruler of the world, in order that this blessed Virgin Mary should come from Nazareth to Bethlehem; that this wonderful babe should be born in the place foretold by the prophet. And so it came to pass that while they were at Bethlehem she brought forth her firstborn son, * * * and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke ii, 1-7). The only babe that was ever born whose birth did not mean the beginning of his existence, for of this child it was true that His goings forth were from the days of eternity (Mic. v, 2). He had walked in human form with Adam in Eden, had eaten Abraham's food, talked with Joshua, Gideon and Manoah. Truly great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh (I Tim. iii, 16).

We are not required to understand it, but simply to believe it, as little children who believe what they are told, for these things are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. These shepherds were like babes, for when told the wonderful tidings they did not for a moment question, but said, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us” (verse 15). They came with haste and found it just as the angel had said, and then they made known abroad that which they had seen and heard (verses 16, 17). When the disciples were sent to bring the ass' colt for Him to ride upon and to find the room where they might prepare the last passover, it is written of each event that “they found as He had said unto them” (Luke xix, 32; xxii, 13). As to making it known, we think of Peter and John and hear them saying, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts iv, 20). All shall come to pass as it is written in the book, and we shall find in this world and in the ages to come just as He has said.

If we were as simple minded believers as these shepherds we would be ever glorifying and praising God for all the things heard and seen, as told us in His Word. Some would only wonder, but some would, like Mary, keep the words in their hearts and ponder them (verses 18-20). It is ours to tell. He will watch over His word, and it will always accomplish His pleasure (Isa. lv, 11; Jer. i, 12). The shepherds were quietly occupied with their regular work, keeping watch over their flocks, when the messenger from heaven came to them with the wonderful tidings. So it was with Moses and Aaron and Elisha and Amos and Zacharias and Mary; all were going about their ordinary work. The angel came in the night. The world was still and unexpected. When our Lord shall come again it will be in such an hour as we think not. There was a glory with the angel which made the shepherds sore afraid, but the first word was the oft repeated “Fear not.” How many do you know? How many have you appropriated and laid to heart? The good tidings of great joy were not only for them, but for all people. Can the tidings be really joyful to those who profess to believe them, but are doing nothing to help all people to know?

Can people know Jesus Christ the Lord as their own personal Saviour, who forgives and saves them, and not desire above all things to make known this great salvation? It does seem impossible. But how explain the indifference of the vast multitude of professed believers? Are those who are not interested in making known the glad tidings real believers? God only knows. Suddenly a multitude of angels join the first angel, and all unite in proclaiming, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” Not peace, but glory to God, is the first thing, and there can be no peace until we are willing to glorify God by honoring His Son. He must be seen by faith and accepted as truly man of supernatural birth, truly God manifest in the flesh, a Saviour, the only Saviour; not one who helps people to save themselves, but a Saviour who saves the hopelessly lost, and saves wholly by His great salvation, which He had Himself accomplished and bestows freely upon all who receive Him.



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Where Art Ceases.

All art is a matter of nature or life acted upon by man; a part taken out of its accidental surroundings and given artistic form. At either side of the field of true art is a waste place where art ceases to have beauty. And the waste on the one side is reached when the artist becomes so enamored of life that he forgets to interpret, to give artistic form, and only brings forth a photographic image, while the waste on the other side is reached when the artist perfects his form but forgets to put life into it.—Sheldon Cheney.

Explained.
“What a beautiful woman!”
“Yes.”
“Friend of yours?”
“Yes; I know her intimately.”
“What is her name?”
“Er—er—I am not certain.”
“What! How can that be when you know her so intimately?”
“She marries so often, you see.”

His Rich Relation.
“He is a distant relative of yours, I believe.”
“Yes.”
“You are fond of him no doubt.”
“Not at all.”
“He is rich, isn't he?”
“Yes, and, although merely distantly related, when I came to make a touch I found him too close.”

RHEUMATISM ARRESTED

Many people suffer the tortures of lame muscles and stiffened joints because of impurities in the blood, and each succeeding attack seems more acute until rheumatism has invaded the whole system. To arrest rheumatism it is quite as important to improve your general health as to purify your blood, and the cod liver oil in Scott's Emulsion is nature's great blood-maker, while its medicinal nourishment strengthens the organs to expel the impurities and rebuild your strength. Scott's Emulsion is helping thousands every day who could not find other relief. Refuse the alcoholic substitutes.

The Outdoor Life.

“The doctor says I don't take enough interest in outdoor pastimes.”
“Are you going to profit by his suggestion?”
“Yes. I'm going to sit down and read every word on the sporting page.”—Washington Star.

Cause of the Pessimism.

Orator—On the surface things are often right, but it is when we explore the depths of things that we see the deceptions of our fellow creatures. One of the Crowd—Guvnor, you've been buying a barrel of apples, haven't you?—London Tit-Bits.

The Real Need.

Book Agent—This book will teach you how to economize. The Victim—That's no good to me. What I need is a book to teach me how to live without economizing.—Philadelphia Ledger.

The song that nerves a nation's heart is in itself a deed.—Tennyson.

The Wretchedness of Constipation

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