

in search; but always when he found the tracks again their character showed that the men were still carrying their burden. The tracks seemed fresher now; in spite of his weakness he was advancing much faster than the others had been able to do in the darkness and heavily laden. As near as he could tell, the men had passed just before dawn. Suddenly he came upon the pike which ran parallel to the line of the lake, some hundred yards back from the shore.

He shrank back, throwing himself upon his face in the bushes; the men evidently had crossed this pike. Full day had come, and as Eaton peered out and up and down the road, he saw no one; this road appeared to be unguarded. Eaton, assured no one was in sight, leaped up and crossed the road. As he reached its further side, a boy carrying a fishpole appeared suddenly from behind some bushes. He stared at Eaton; then, terrified by Eaton's appearance, he dropped the fishpole and fled screaming up the road. Eaton stared dazedly after him for a fraction of an instant, then plunged into the cover. He found the tracks again, and followed them dizzily.

But the boy had given the alarm. Eaton heard the whirring of motors on the road and men shouting to one another; then he heard them beating through the bushes. The noise was at some distance; evidently the boy in his fright and confusion had not directed the men to the exact spot where Eaton had entered the woods or they in their excitement had failed to understand him. But the sounds were drawing nearer. Eaton, exhausted and dizzy, followed feverishly the footmarks on the ground. It could not be far now—the men could not have carried their burden much further than this. They must have hidden it somewhere near here. He must find it near by—must find it before these others found him. But now he could see men moving among the tree-trunks. He threw himself down among some bushes, burrowing into the dead leaves. The men passed him, one so close that Eaton could have thrown a twig and hit him. Eaton could not understand why the man did not see him, but he did not; the man stopped an instant studying the footmarks imprinted in the earth; evidently they had no significance for him, for he went on.

When the searchers had passed out of sight, Eaton sprang up and followed the tracks again. They were distinct here, plainly printed, and he followed easily. He could hear men all about him, out of sight but calling to one another in the woods. All at once he recoiled, throwing himself down again upon the ground. The clump of bushes hiding him ended abruptly only a few yards away; through their bare twigs, but far below him, the sunlight twinkled, mockingly, at him from the surface of water. It was the lake!

Eaton crept forward to the edge of the steep bluff, following the tracks. He peered over the edge. The tracks did not stop at the edge of the bluff; they went on down it. The steep sandy precipice was scarred where the men, still bearing their burden, had slipped and scrambled down it. The marks crossed the shingle sixty feet below; they were deeply printed in the wet sand down to the water's very edge. There they stopped.

EATON had not expected this. He stared, worn out, with his senses in confusion, and overcome by physical weakness. The sunlit water only seemed to mock and laugh at him—blue, rippling under the breeze and bearing no trail. It was quite plain what had occurred; the wet sand below was trampled by the feet of three or four men and cut by a boat's bow. They had taken the body away with them in the boat. To sink it somewhere weighted with heavy stones in the deep water? Or had it been carried away on that small, swift vessel Eaton had seen from Santoine's lawn? In either case, Eaton's search was hopeless now.

But it could not be so; it must not be so! Eaton's eyes searched feverishly the shore and the lake. But there was nothing in sight upon either. He crept back from the edge of the bluff, hiding beside a fallen log banked with dead leaves. What was it he had

said to Harriet? "I will come back to you—as you have never known me before!" He rehearsed the words in mockery. How would he return to her now? As he moved, a fierce, hot pain from the clotted wound in his shoulder shot him through and through with agony and the silence and darkness of unconsciousness overwhelmed him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Not Eaton—Overton.

SANTOINE awoke at five o'clock. The messenger whom he had despatched a few hours earlier had not yet returned. The blind man felt strong and steady; he had food brought him; while he was eating it, his messenger returned. Santoine saw the man alone and, when he had dismissed him, he sent for his daughter.

Harriet had waited helplessly at the house all day. All day the house had been besieged. The newspaper men—or most of them—and the crowds of the curious could be kept off; but others—neighbours, friends of her father's or their wives or other members of their families—claimed their prerogative of intrusion and question in time of trouble. Many of those who thus gained admittance were unused to the flattery of reporter's questions; and from their interviews, sensations continued to grow.

The stranger in Santoine's house—the man whom no one knew and who had given his name as Philip Eaton—in all the reports was proclaimed the murderer. The first reports in the papers had assailed him; the stories of the afternoon papers became a public clamour for his quick capture, trial and execution. The newspapers had sent the idle and the sensation seekers, with the price of carfare to the country place, to join the pack roaming the woods for Eaton. Harriet, standing at a window, could see them beating through the trees beyond the house; and as she watched them, wild, hot anger against them seized her. She longed to rush out and strike them and shame them and drive them away.

The village police station called her frequently on the telephone to inform her of the progress of the hunt. Twice, they told her, Eaton had been seen, but both times he had avoided capture; they made no mention of his having been fired upon. Avery, in charge of the pursuit in the field, was away all day; he came in only for a few moments at lunch time, and then Harriet avoided him. As the day progressed, the pursuit had been systematized; the wooded spots which were the only ones that Eaton could have reached unobserved from the places where he had been seen, had been surrounded. They were being searched carefully one by one. Through the afternoon, Harriet kept herself informed of this search; there was no report that Eaton had been seen again, but the places where he could be grew steadily fewer.

The day had grown toward dusk, when a servant brought her word that her father wished to see her. Harriet went up to him fearfully. The blind man seemed calm and quiet; a thin, square packet lay on the bed beside him; he held it out to her without speaking.

She snatched it in dread; the shape of the packet and the manner in which it was fastened told her it must be a photograph. "Open it," her father directed.

She snapped the string and tore off the paper.

She stared at it, and her breath left her; she held it and stared and stared, sobbing now as she breathed. The photograph was of Hugh, but it showed him as she had never seen or known him; the even, direct eyes, the good brow, the little lift of the head were his; he was younger in the picture—she was seeing him when he was hardly more than a boy. But it was a boy to whom something startling, amazing, horrible had happened, numbing and dazing him so that he could only stare out from the picture in frightened, helpless defiance. That oppression which she had felt in him had just come upon him; he was not yet used to bearing what had happened; it seemed incredible and unbearable to

(Continued on page 31.)




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