

# The BLACK BOX

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Author of "Mr. Grey of Monte Carlo," "The Vanished Messenger," "The Lighted Way," etc.

Novelized from the motion picture drama of the same name produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company. With photographs from the motion picture production.

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**SEE THE MOVING PICTURES CORRESPONDING WITH THIS INSTALLMENT IN PALACE THEATRE, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, THIS WEEK.**

### SYNOPSIS.

Stanford Quest, master criminologist of the world, finds that in bringing to justice MacDougal, the murderer of Ashleigh's daughter, he has but just begun a life-and-death struggle with a mysterious master criminal in a hidden hut in Professor Ashleigh's garden. He has been an anthropoid ape skeleton and a living human creature, half monkey, half man, destroyed by fire. In his room have appeared from nowhere black boxes, one containing diamonds torn from a lovely throat by a pair of arms, threatening hands, both with scientific, threatening notes signed by the inscrutable hands. He is arrested for the murder of his valet, Rose Brown, and a Miss Quest, in his rooms. Laura and Lenora, his assistant's suspect Craig, the professor's valet, Lenora is abducted by the threatening hands, but is rescued. Quest clears himself of the murder charge, but falls to trap Craig. In his room another black box appears in the ruffled safe and, returning the diamonds a second time, a accompanying note tells him he has no chance against the inherited cunning of ages.

### SEVENTH INSTALLMENT THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

Something in the nature of a conference was proceeding in Quest's study. The professor was there, seated in the most comfortable easy-chair, smoking without relish one of his host's best cigars, watching with nervous impatience the closed door. Laura and Lenora were seated at the table, dressed for the street. They had the air of being prepared for some excursion. Quest, realizing the professor's highly strung state, had left him alone for a few moments and was studying a map of New York. The latter, however, was too ill at ease to keep silent for long.

"Our friend French," he remarked, "gave you no clue, I suppose, as to the direction in which his investigations are leading him?"

Quest glanced up from the map. "None at all. I know, however, that the house in which Lenora here was confined is being watched closely."

The professor glanced across toward the table before which Lenora was seated.

"It seems strange," he continued, "that the young lady should have so little to tell us about her incarceration."

Lenora shivered for a moment.

"What could there be to tell," she asked, "except that it was all horrible, and that I felt things—felt dangers—which I couldn't describe."

The professor gave vent to an impatient little exclamation.

"I am not speaking for fancies," he persisted. "You had food brought to you, for instance. Could you never see the hand which placed it inside your room? Could you hear nothing of the footsteps of the person who brought it? Could you not even surmise whether it were a man or a woman?"

anyway," the inspector remarked, as he lit his cigar. "I am going to propose a little excursion down Gayson avenue way."

"Back to that house?" Lenora exclaimed with a grimace.

The inspector nodded.

"We have had those boys at the station," he went on, "and we have questioned them carefully. It seems that after they had picked up the ball, a man came out of the side entrance of the house, saw them reading Miss Lenora's message, and shouted after them. The boys had sense enough to scoot. The man ran after them, but had to give it up. Here is their description of him."

The inspector took a piece of paper from his pocket. They all waited breathlessly.

"Had to drag this out of the boys, bit by bit," the inspector proceeded, "but boiled down and put into reasonable language, this is what it comes to: A man of medium height, rather thin, pale, and after running a short distance he put his hand to his heart, as though out of breath. One of the boys thought his nose was a little hooked, and they both remarked upon the fact that although he shouted after them, he used no swear words, but simply tried to induce them to stop. This description suggest anything to you, gentlemen?"

"Craig," Lenora said firmly.

"It is a very accurate description of our friend French," Stanford Quest agreed.

The professor looked troubled, also a little perplexed. He said nothing, however.

"Under these circumstances," the inspector continued, "I have had the house watched, and I propose that we now search it systematically. It is very possible that something may transpire to help us."

"Of course, my men went through it roughly when we brought Miss Lenora away, but that wasn't anything of a search to count, if the place really has become a haunt of criminals."

French." The inspector maneuvered to let the others pass on, and descended the stairs by Lenora's side.

"Couldn't help it," he confided, lowering his tone a little. "Had some information in about that house I couldn't quite size up. You're looking well this morning, Miss Laura."

"Say, who are you saying?" she replied. "I mean it," the inspector persisted. "That has seems to suit you."

Laura laughed at the top of her voice.

"Say, kid," she exclaimed to Lenora, "the inspector here's setting up as a judge of millinery!"

Lenora turned and looked at them both with an air of blank astonishment. The inspector was a little embarrassed.

"No need to give me away like that," he muttered, as they reached the hall. "Now then, ladies and gentlemen, if you are ready."

They took their places in the automobile and drove off. As they neared the vicinity of Gayson avenue the professor began to show signs of renewed uneasiness. When they drew up at last outside the house he gave a little exclamation. His face was grave, almost haggard.

"Mr. Quest," he said, "Inspector French, I deeply regret that I have a statement to make."

They both turned quickly toward him. The inspector smiled in a confidential manner at Laura. It was obvious that he knew what was coming.

"Some years ago," the professor continued, "I bought this house and made a present of it to—"

"To whom?" Quest asked quickly. "To my servant Craig," the professor admitted with a groan.

Lenora gave a little cry. She turned triumphantly towards the inspector.

"All recollection as to its locality had escaped me," the professor continued sorrowfully. "I remember that it was on the anniversary of his having been with me for some fifteen years that I decided to show him some substantial mark of my appreciation. I knew that he was looking for a domicile for his father and

four ago from a call once and connection was established. That is to say, that someone spoke from this telephone."

"Then if your men have maintained their search properly, that someone," Quest said slowly, "must be in the house at the present moment."

"Without a doubt," the inspector agreed.

"I am going to search the front room on the first floor before we do anything else," said Quest. "I think that if you wait here I may be able to show you something directly."

Quest ascended the stairs and entered a wholly unlit room of the left-hand side. He looked for a minute contemplatively at a large but rather shallow cupboard, the door of which stood open, and tapped lightly with his forefinger on the back part of it. Then he withdrew a few feet and, drawing out his revolver, deliberately fired into the floor, a few inches inside. There was a half-stifled cry. The false back suddenly swung open and a man rushed out. Quest's revolver covered him, but there was no necessity for his use.

Craig, smothered with dust, his face white as a piece of marble, even his jaw shivering with fear, was wholly unarmed. He seemed, in fact, incapable of any form of resistance.

"Walk out of the room," Quest ordered, "in front of me—so! Now turn to the right and go down the stairs."

They all gave a little cry as they saw him appear, a trembling, pitiful creature, glancing around like a trapped animal. He commenced to descend the stairs, holding tightly to the banisters. Quest remained on the landing above, his revolver in his hand. Arched waited in the hall below, also armed. Laura gripped Lenora's arm in excitement.

"Got him, sure!" she exclaimed. "On the fourth or fifth stair Craig hesitated. He suddenly saw the professor standing below. He gripped the banisters with one hand. The other he flung out in a threatening gesture."

"You've given me away to these bloodhounds!" he cried—"you, for whom I have worked and slaved, whom I have followed all over the world, whom I have served faithfully with the last breath of my body and the last drop of blood in my veins! You have brought them here—tracked me down! You!"

The professor shook his head sorrowfully.

"Craig," he said, "you have been the best servant man ever had. If you are innocent of these crimes you can clear yourself. If you are guilty a dog's death is none too good for you."

Craig seemed to sway for a moment upon his feet. Only Lenora, from the hall, saw that he was fitting his right foot into what seemed to be a leather loop hanging from the banisters. Then a wild shout of surprise broke from the lips of all of them, followed by a moment of stupefied wonder.

The whole staircase suddenly began to revolve. Craig, clinging to the banisters, disappeared. In a moment or two there was a fresh click. Another set of stairs, identical to the first, had taken their place.

Quest declared. "I want to get down to the docks—not where the passenger steamers start from—lower down. Good! We'll wait."

"See here, professor," he continued, "that fellow wouldn't dare to send this message if he weren't pretty sure of getting off. He's made all his plans beforehand, but it's my belief we shall just get our hands upon him, after all."

Presently they heard the automobile stop outside and French appeared.

"Anything doing?" he asked. Quest showed him the card and the calling list.

The inspector glanced at the clock.

"Then we've got to make tracks," he declared, "and pretty quick, too. She'll be starting from somewhere about number twenty-eight dock, a long way down. Come along, gentlemen."

They hurried out to the automobile and started off for the docks. The latter part of their journey was accomplished under difficulties, for the street was packed with drays and heavy vehicles. They reached dock number twenty-eight at last, however, and hurried through the shed on to the wharf. There were no signs of a steamer there.

"Where's the Durham?" Quest asked one of the carters, who was just getting his team together.

"The man pointed out to the middle of the river, where a small steamer was lying."

"There she is," he replied. "She'll be off in a few minutes. You'll hear the sirens directly when they begin to move down."

Quest led the way quickly to the edge of the wharf. There was a small tug there, the crew of which were just making her fast for the night.

"Fifty dollars if you'll take us out to the Durham and catch her before she sails," Quest shouted to the man who seemed to be the captain.

They clambered down the iron ladder and jumped on to the deck of the tug. The captain seized the wheel. The two men who formed the crew took off their coats and waistcoats.

"Give it to her, Jim," the former ordered. "Now then, here goes! We'll just miss the ferry."

They swung around and commenced their journey. Quest stood with his watch in his hand. They were getting up the anchor of the Durham and from higher up the river came the screech of steamers beginning to move on their outward way.

"We'll make it all right," the captain assured them.

They were within a hundred yards of the Durham when Quest gave a little exclamation. From the other side of the steamer another tug shot out away, turning back towards New York. Huddled up in the stern, half concealed in a tarpaulin, was a man in a plain black suit. Quest, with a little shout, recognized the man at the helm from his long, brown beard.

"That's one of those fellows who was in the truck," he declared, "and that's Craig in the stern! We've got him this time. Say, captain, it's that lug I want. Never mind about the steamer. Catch it and I'll make it a hundred dollars!"

"We've got her!" the captain exclaimed. There's the ferry and the first of the steamers coming down in the middle. They'll have to chuck it."

Right ahead of them, blazing with lights, a huge ferry came churning the river up and sending waves in their direction. On the other side,

Quest crossed the room towards his cigar cabinet, and opened it. His little start was apparent to both of them.

Lenora hid down the bag which she had just lifted up. The professor leaned forward in his chair.

"What is it, Quest?" he demanded. Quest stretched out his hand and picked up from the top of the cigars a small black box. He held it on the table.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," he said, "it is another communication from our mysterious friend."

"Impossible!" the professor exclaimed hoarsely.

"How can he have been here?" Lenora cried.

The box removed the lid from the box and drew out a circular card. Around the outside edge was a very clever pen-and-ink sketch of a lifebuoy, and inside the margin were several sentences of clear handwriting—the etched hands! Quest read the message aloud:

In the great scheme of things, the Supreme Ruler of the universe divided an inheritance amongst his children. To one he gave power, to another strength, to another beauty, but to his favorite he gave cunning. They all looked at one another.

## HOW LONG WILL THE WAR LAST?

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He Was Wearing Craig's Clothes.

mother, who are since both dead, and I requested a house agent to send me in a list of suitable residences. This, alas! was the one I purchased."

Quest glanced around the place.

"I think," he said, "that the professor's statement now removes any doubt as to Craig's guilt. You are sure the house has been closely watched, Inspector?"

"Since I received certain information," French replied, "I have had half a dozen of my best men in the vicinity. I can assure you that no one has entered or left it during the last twenty-four hours."

They made their way to the piazza steps and entered by the front door. The house was an ordinary frame of one of moderate size, in poor repair, and showing signs of great neglect. The rooms were barely furnished and their first cursory search revealed no traces of habitation.

There was still the broken skylight in the room which Lenora had occupied, and the bed upon which she had slept was still crumpled. French, who had been tapping the walls down the stairs, called to them. They trooped down into the hall. The inspector was standing before what appeared to be an ordinary panel.

"Look here," he said, glancing out of the corner of his eye to be sure that Laura was there, "let me show you what I have just discovered."



Quest Stood on Guard.

unnaturally large, loomed up the great bows of an ocean-going steamer. The tug was swung round and they ran up alongside. The man with the beard leaned over.

"Say, what's your trouble?" he demanded.

The inspector stepped forward.

"I want that man you've got under the tarpaulin," he announced.

## Reeve of Gananogue Withdraws His Resignation

A special meeting of Council was held on Thursday evening, for general business, although the primary object of the meeting was to consider the resignation of Reeve Darling, which was announced last week, had been placed in the hands of the Clerk.

The matters which led the Reeve to take the step were discussed at some length and with some feeling, when a resolution setting forth that it was the unanimous opinion of the Council that he should be requested to reconsider his action, was carried, and Mr. Darling asked that he be given 24 hours to think the matter over before giving a final answer.

Every member of the Board spoke in laudatory terms of Mr. Darling and the work he had done in connection with town matters and promised individual support if he would remain in the Council.

Yesterday morning Mr. Darling withdrew his resignation and will fill out the terms for which he was elected.—Reporter.

## Work to Re-commence on Madoc Streets

Owing to a break-down on the present crusher it has been decided to have the other county crusher brought to Madoc next week when work will be re-commenced on the village streets. Dr. W. S. Harper, the Reeve, has secured the county steam roller which will be in operation next week rolling the crushed rock already laid. This is the first time this roller has ever been used in this vicinity.—Review.

## Old Madoc Boy Among New K.C.'s

Fourteen prominent lawyers of the Province of Quebec, among whom is the name of J. W. Blair, have been made King's Councillors by the Provincial Government.—Review.

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The Whole Staircase Suddenly Began to Revolve.

replied promptly. "You've stretched your ten minutes out some, Mr."