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Mystery of the Tower

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12.

it aside. Something above was holding it down—what? The perspiration rained down his face with the struggles he made in that hot, confined place; but he kept on with his desperate attempts, feeling more and more certain what it was that was lying so inertly across that door.

At last he gave one determined push, and succeeded in sliding the trap door a few inches to one side. At the same instant something above seemed to give way. An icy hand shot out, and struck him on the cheek.

He lost his hold, and fell back, grasping wildly.

CHAPTER V.

IT was fortunate for Percy Marshall that his shoulder struck the wall as he fell. He was knocked against the ladder, and he grasped the sides with his arms and slid, striking the floor heavily. For an instant he was dazed. Then he forced himself to look up. Nothing—he could see nothing in the patchy blackness of that narrowing spire.

He put his hand against his cheek, drew it quickly away, and shivered. Marble-cold, the spot which that icy hand had touched.

He crept towards the arch, and lying at full length leaned out as far as he could. He saw the setting sun. It gave him courage. His eyes turned mechanically towards the green earth so far beneath him. He saw two sheep peacefully nibbling at the grass, and far away a little child toddling along with a basket on her arm. A tiny fat dog, who looked like an ant, waddled after her. He stood up and drew a long breath, and became conscious of pain in his right foot. He had strained it in his fall.

He took the little pieces of silk from his pocket and examined it carefully. It was of a heavy rich material, apparently new, and on the very edge was a tiny brown stain. When Marshall saw this he turned to descend, then paused.

What would Margaret Lee think if she could be looking again to-night, as she had looked the night before, and saw him hesitating because a dead hand had chanced to smite his cheek? He imagined her watching him now, her face white, but her eyes trying to send a message of brave encouragement.

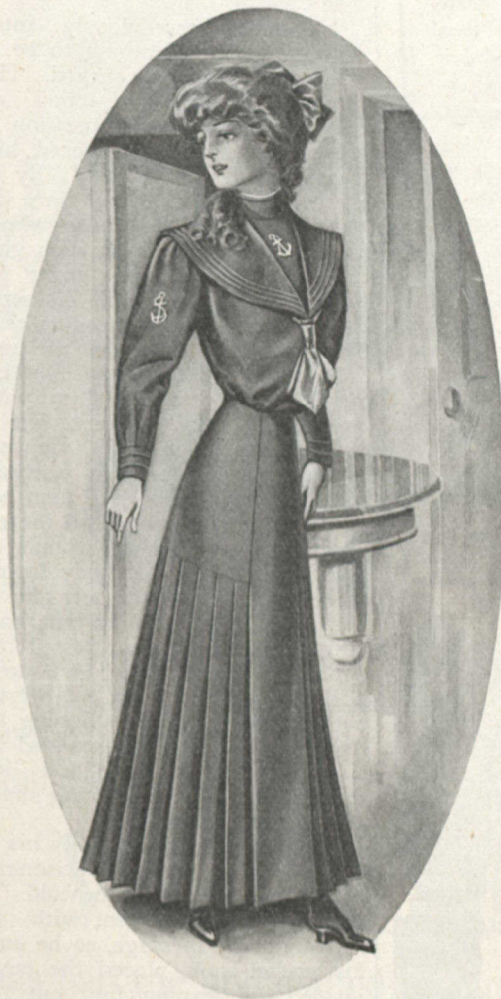
He looked at his watch. It was nearly seven o'clock, and he had promised to see her before that. She was alone, nobody was there to help, to comfort her. But he must finish his task. He started upwards. Near the top he lighted a match, and looked steadily above.

Yes, it was as he had thought. An arm dangled helplessly through the opening, the arm of a man, encased in a sleeve of fine black cloth. The hand that protruded from the white linen cuff was small and slender, but firm. Its little finger bore a ring—a beautifully carved intaglio, surrounded by a golden serpent, and the links that held the cuff were black onyx, one having a minute diamond at its centre, the other a tiny pearl.

Marshall photographed these details on his mind. His way was now clear before him. He had only to go to the nearest police station and report what he had seen. His work was done.

He paused on the landing, and looked once again in the direction of Margaret Lee's home. He had something to tell her now—something to prove that he had wasted no moment in carrying out her wishes. He pictured her sad, eager face when he should stand before her and tell her

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