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## THE STRANGER AND THE PRINCESS

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS

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"Bob Monroe!" exclaimed Wallace. "I did not think-but this disguise-

what does it mean?" "They do not allow outsiders to visit prisoners who are charged with murder till after the investigation. But a very kind officer of police came to me this morning and put me on to a scheme to get you out of here. It seems that the police are determined to fasten this crime on you, no matter who did it. The idea is that if you are fortunate enough to show proof at the investigation that you perhaps did not do it they will murder you in the Conciergere before the trial. Poison can be put in

"Heavens! Do they do such things "Queer things happen in Paris. That is no worse than many I have known.

Now the thing is to get out." "Out! You mean to escape from the

Palais de Justice?" "Certainly. Would you remain here

and be killed?" "But I want to establish my innocence. What will become of me if I scape and so appear to be guilty?" "They will not give you a chance to prove your innocence. They will kill

you. If you are out, you can employ detectives and thus run down the "But I can't. I have no money. Did you not know that my uncle died and left me nothing? I am as poor as any

crossing sweeper."
"Never mind. Come with me, and I will furnish the money to ferret out the crime and also to start you again to prosperity. You are young, and can make your way."

"And you really think they intend to "If one of the police say so, I do not

doubt it. He must have been a friend. An enemy would simply let you go to your execution." To the cool, disinterested mind there were plenty of flaws in this reasoning,

but to these two, hot with fear and indignation, with the awful realities making more vivid the dread possibilities, there was nothing unreasonable in it

Buckford Wallace loved life better than he did the popular idea of justice in France.

At 22 one takes almost any chance. It did not look to either of them disonorable to effect this escape, knowing the prisoner to be innocent and yet

I am not sure it was dishonorable. I am sure that under the same circumstances I would have done the

same thing-provided I had the skill and courage. The exchange of disguise was effected. Wallace staggered from the cell and fell. The footman tried to raise him. The attendant came, and the unconscious man was carried to

the waiting carriage. Monroe had said "Home" to the coachman. The German had already received his instructions. It was not home the American meant, but the address given by the friendly police

agent. It took an hour to reach it. The house was an ordinary stone building in the street called Rue de Creuse. This was the street on which Buckford had made his exit from the cellar and the street on which the house of M. de Bullion faced.

ate vicinity of the former scenes of Buckford's adventures. The carriage stopped, and the two got out. They were met at the street door by the smiling and victorious agent of police.

It was not, however, in the immedi-

"Ah, ha! It takes you Americans



lighted. I congratulate you. It was well done. Enter, and I will call for refreshments at once."

"It seems good to be at liberty once more," said Buckford. "Where is this "In the Rue de Creuse," replied Mon

roe. "I don't know the neighborhood." Neither did Buckford. Had he known that the Rue de Creuse was the next street to the Rue de Mont-Rouge he might have had a queer sensation.

They were led into a small room, where two or three tables stood against

"This cafe is not known as such to

many," said the obliging police agent,

by a friend of mine, an estimable lady, who had the misfortune to be left a widow with two children to support. Mme. du Barry will be here presently and make you feel at home and wel-

Instead of Mme. du Barry, however, a waiter appeared with glasses, a bottle of wine and a card on which to

write the orders of the gentlemen.

They each ordered a substantial supper, for they were hungry, and laughed as they spoke of the difference between the meal Buckford was going to eat and the one he would have had in the depot.

Suddenly, when they had grown used to the place and the sense of security had become strong, a panel opened in the door directly behind Buckford, and a heavy club, made of an eelskin stuffed with sand, descended on his

head. He fell unconscious to the floor. Monroe, who had seen the panel slide, had leaned to his feet and drawn a pistol from his pocket. But the obliging police agent leaped like a panther upon him, pinioned his arms, and while his cries for help rang impotently against the walls two other scoundrels rushed in, and the deadly clubs that kill and leave no mark rained

In the darkness of the night poor Bob Monroe, too chivalrous and confiding, was dragged by the heels to the refuse heap of a nearby brewery facing on the Rue de Mont-Rouge.

Which explains the cry of the police-man who rushed into the office of the investigating magistrate, M. Senecal, and struck everybody dumb with his startling information.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRATORS OVERHEARD. was more chance than mercy that saved Buckford's life when Monroe, less fortunate than he, was battered to death by the clubs of his hidden assailants. He had not seen the attack, and the first blow sent him unconscious to the floor. Monroe had seen the blow struck and, rising to fight, had brought the concentrated fury of the murderers upon himself.

Having killed one innocent, the thirst for blood of the scoundrels must have been assuaged, or they were acting under orders that left them but one course to pursue.

Or, perhaps they did not examine Buckford closely enough to discover that he had not been killed One corpse on the refuse heap was

enough. At any rate, Buckford, instead of being dragged from the building as Moncoe had been, was taken to a small room and left lying on the floor in his awful stupor.

He did not know, and it is not our business to say, just how long he lay there. He awoke at first with a dull throbbing pain in his head. He was conscious of a terrible thirst. Half stupefied, yet knowing he was where he ought not to be, he sat up and looked around him.

Gradually, as his blood circulated more freely, the pain in his head decreased, and his senses became more He found that he was in a very smul

room that had evidently been formed after the house was built, by running a partition of thin and narrow wooden strips across the end of a larger room. The purpose of this little room-the original purpose—was not apparent. It may have been to provide an extra bed or dressing room. Its present purpose was clear-it was his prison.

The room was about six feet in width and about ten in length. The wooden partition ran along one of the long sides, and in this there was small door. At one of the narrow ends there

was a window. Wallace sat for some time on the floor before he gathered strength enough to rise. The blow on his head

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There was absolutely no furniture in the room. It was, however, carpeted

with a thick, firm fabric. After a time he rose to his feet, shook off the momentary dizziness, and be gan a more extended examination of his prison.

He was really ill enough to be in bed. but excitement and the sense of im-

pending danger kept him up.

He did not know that Monroe was dead. He had last seen Monroe sitting quietly at a table drinking wine and waiting for his supper. He first tried the door in the wooden

partition. It was locked. He then

went to the window. It opened upon a small narrow court. The building opposite was almost devoid of windows. There were two or three little openings on the court for ventilation, but nothing to be called a

window as windows go.

But leaning from his window and looking down he saw that there was a similar one underneath it in the same house. It opened, no doubt, from a room similar to the one he was in, or similar to the one that existed before

the wooden partition was put in. The window was there, but it con veyed no thought of escape to his mind. He had not as yet begun to form any plan of escape. The ground was far below him-the paved court, from which no exit was seen, except through the lower stories of the abutting buildings.

He turned from the window and leaned against the wall in deep and

troubled study. Where was Monroe? That was the first question he asked himself. It was clear that the plan to rescue him from the police station was simply to bring him again into the hands of the enemies of the prince. The plot had succeeded, as far as he was concerned, but

where was Monroe? No suspicion of the American en-tered the head of Wallace. He believed that Monroe had been duped by the pretended police agent. He hoped that Monroe had been more fortunate than he and had made his escape.

In that case the best thing that could happen was for Monroe to confess his share in the plot to the police and have them come to recapture him.

Terrible as was the uncertainty of his fate in the hands of the police, his situation as a captive of the plotters was worse.

But would Monroe confess? Would he betray himself to the police and destroy his position in Parisian society? While Buckford thought out all these perplexing questions he became suddenly conscious that voices could be heard through the wooden partition. He bent himself to bring his ear to

the keyhole of the door. "Undoubtedly both Americans are dead," said one voice. "The poor dupe who did our work so well has been discovered in the brewery court and tak-



have a fine hunt for the murderers. But this will simply be another great mystery for Paris to ponder over.

These police! They are but cheap fools at best.' "Let's take a look at this one," said another voice. "I have somehow come to consider this fellow a dangerous enemy. He seems at least to care little for life. It is the man who is will-

ing to die who lives through every-"Bah! He has fallen into difficulties at every step. Why, even Vandal's little act was attributed to him." "Yes, but he was caught in the very house with the corpse of M. de Bul-

"It was a most fortunate circumstance that Vandal gave him the

purse. Buckford's breath came fast now, These words meant much to him. They proved that the man who had given him the purse, the man who had had most to do apparently with the plot against the prince, was the man who killed M. de Bullion.

"Well," said the other, "Vandal is a Parisian and knows a thing or two." The footsteps of the two speakers were now heard close to the little door, Buckford, remembering the remark, "Let's take a look at this one," lay down on the floor and assumed a position nearly like that in which he had

before been lying.

A key sounded in the lock, and the

door opened.
"He has not moved." No one came near him. One glance sufficed to prove to the two men that he had been lying in that position since

he had been brought to the room.

The door was again shut and the lock clicked. Buckford slowly opened his eyes to room. He saw no one and sprang to his feet and applied his ear at the key-

hole agein.
To be Continued.

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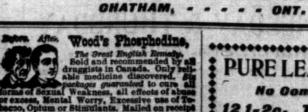
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