THE NORTH AMERICAN COMPANY

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

disappears without leaving the slightest trace. She was a quiet, retiring sin only one distinguishing feature—beautiful Titian hair, which had been a mark to sit of the start for her, and finally receives intelligence that a girl answer-to her description has been seen with a band of gypsies. Which a gypsy, he finds Isobet, almost dead, in an abandoned dwelling. Her es have been changed, and when she recovers she seems to be another girl. All only of her experiences has been was do ut by the privations she has undergone, she begins a new life. Her character is quite changed, and she completely capsulated, whose affection for her heretofore has been more of the cousinly kind, in one of the pockets of her gown is found an old Testament, which Sir David apriates, and he seems unexplainably perturbed over her return. Tarious stories of the girl's experiences are circulated, and attract the attention while Sir David extracts a promise from Basil that he will not renew his entering the same of the same of the cousines from Basil that he will not renew his entering the same same success that is four months away. Then, to complicate matters her, ashe saves Isobel from being run over by an automobile, and discovers that lot Testament which is in David's possession may contain a clue to the mystery or seemingly dual identity.

CHAPTER XVII

scene of hill and wood and river, half-

With that wide restful beauty outspread before her she was ready to think that her passion of shocked pride and hurt feeling must have been exag-gerated. Surely she must have taken

her father's hasty words and action as

much too seriously as he had apparently

regarded hers. Of course, it had been very stilly of her to lose her temper and

behave in such a childish fashion, especially before her cousin Basil, and at

the thought her radiant morning face



his love, less chivairously determined that the girl should have fair play, that she should not be forced to a decision while half beside herself with pain and passion, he might have stormed her maiden fortess then and there and borne the prize away. But the friendly, hearty, commonsense tone, as it sounded to Isobel's ears, was an excellent tonic for her excited, overwrought fancy, Already that formless visionary dread was shrinking away THE EMPTY SPACE dreamless sleep often sets such a. gulf between the night before and our waking recol-lections of them that, looking back visionary dread was shrinking away before it, like a dream fading in dayacross it, they seem to have faded and dwindled almost to insignificance. Worn out, Isobel had slept long and late,

"I knew, of course, you would think me foolish" she began, drawing away a little from the arm which he had ventured to put around the slight, shak-

en shoulders.

"Well," said Basil, with a laugh,

"I'd rather have your foolishness, as
you call it, than other people's wis-

"But it's not all foolishness," broke in Isobel, suddenly raising her head, the quick flash in her eyes seeming to dry her tears; "I wish it were, but you can't deput it." ored garden diamonded with the heavy dew of, autumn to the new familiar seen through a gauzy veil of vapor, it seemed hard, especially to eighteen summers, to realize that life as well as can't deny it." this fair world should not be "very

"No, I don't deny it-not altogether," said Basil. "But will you let me say something, or try to say it, for I'm no good as putting things into words—"
"Oh, say what you like; but to most people it is not difficult to find fault. I have learned that much already," in

"Oh, say what you like; but to most people it is not difficult to find fault. I have learned that much already," in a light, hard tone.

"I am not going to find fault, isobel"—and there was something in his voice which made the gir's bright head droop a little, while the hand which she had half withdrawn trembled back into his clasp—"I wish I could put it as I feel it; but sometimes, in the old days, I used to think it—such a pity that somehow you got so little good of things—of vour life; then, when I saw you again upon the terrace" (in spite of himself his voice shook a little), "I thought I had never realized what happiness meant till I had looked in your face." "Yes, I was happy—then," said Isobel in a low voice, a mist filming the dry brightness of her eyes. "Then why shouldn't you be happy still," said Basil, stoutly. "Things are the same as they wers then except for the nonsense that has been talked. If people tell you you are changed, what does it matter? We yourself, that should be enough. I don't trouble about your old self or your portrait any more. You've outstrown them both, that's all. I know you wouldn't want to be your old self again, even if you could; you seem world somehow."

"Do you think so?"—with a smile of shy pleasure. "But every one doesn't think that—he doesn't," with a sudden-change of voice.

"Try not to think too much of that," gently, "It's easy to say that, I know, but if you had seen your father as i saw him, when you were away, you would not wonder at him now, nor at anything he says or does." Basil was trying to convince himself now as well as isobel, and, therefore, 'uncceded with neither. Perhaps he felt this, for he changed his ground. "If you've lost a good deal—well, then, a great deal—try to think how much more you have gained, and that the gain will go on growing—I know it will. Won't that help you?" meeting her eyes.

"Yes, but do you really think it will?" Her eyes kindled, melted, a faint flush rose in her face.

"I am sure it will," said Basil hastily, and looking aw the thought her radiant morning lace-clouded. "They might make some al-lowance for me—if only they knew what it is," she murmured half-consciously; but though she used the vague plural pronoun it had likely a much more defi-nite significance. Still the sun was shining, sweet airs were blowing and young blood was stirring within her, and when at laz; she came down stairs she was ready again to look upon last night's happenings almost as a bad dream.

The great house was very silent as she passed through the hall. Each of Stormont was with Basil Conyers in her morning room, and every card stormont was with Basil Conyers in her morning room, and every musement of the double the business of the grant of the double the business of the same of the double of th

titude somewhat suggestive of other feelings than cousinly. Her usual tact and insight suddenly failed her. "Have you-" she faltered, half hopefully, half reproachfully, and then her eyes, too, were caught by the empty space upon the wall, and she stopped abruptly.

standing beside her daughter in an at-

Isobel saw the hot embarrassment leap to her cousin's face, and then her eyes followed her mother's to the blank wall, and the missma of bitter, angry doubt, of fear and of sorely hurt pride doubt, of fear and of sorely hurt pride and love, which had been dispelled for a moment by Basil's words as by a breath of fresh, wholesome open air, settled down again darker than ever. "I think I had better follow my por-trait," she said in a low voice out of the bitterness of her heart. "I don't think

it is only on the wall that there seems no place for me here." Her mother sprang after her with a cry, but the girl was gone, light and swift as a vanishing sunray, and Lady Stormont sank into a chair looking

plteously at Conyers.

"Oh, Basil, I thought our troubles were at an end, but they seem only beginning. Have you spoken to her? Surely she has not—"
"No," said Basil bluntly. He could

not trust himself to utter more than the bare monosyllable.
"Then I wish you had," cried poor Lady Stormont, and as Basil Conyers strode in savage silence out of the room. bitterly conscious that his golden moment was past he might well he ex-

ment was past, he might well be ex-cused for feeling himself a most cruel-ly ill-used man. If this were the re-ward of sore restraint, of zealously guarded honor, of hard-kept faith,

CHAPTER XVIII "WHO AM 1?"

LYING not only from the tapestry room, but from the house, Isobel took no heed where she went; her one idea was to get out of sight as quickly as might be, and she turned into the first path leading into the woods. When her first headlong speed slackened, she found herself in a little circular grassy space, ringed in by tall trees, the beautiful sweeping birch mostly, their long swinging tresses now a paly-gold, giving an effect of sunshine in the sombre wood. Hanging between two of their slender stems was a gaily-colored hammock.

Isobel stood still and looked round her, a curious light in her eyes. Though her mother had deemed it wise to talk as little as might be about her strange disappearance and the events which had preceded it, the girl had long ago, as may be supposed, heard every detail from Justine's voluble chatter. Since then she had avoided the Round Wood from a certain morbid shrinking, and now suddenly to find herself there, apart, as it were from her own will, startled her strangely. After a long moment's pause, while she looked round with dilated eyes and set lips, she moved slowly on down that narrow, slippery path which led straight to the Alder Pool, and on its dark brink her feet stayed in a drift of fallen leaves.

The Chadeser was proposed the stayed the

the Alder Pool, and on its dark brink her feet stayed in a drift of fallen leaves.

The morning had not fulfilled its promise. The fleecy vapors had thickened to dull low-hanging clouds, blurring the sky and veiling the sun. Through the tree tops there went a chill, mournful sighing, though the black, glassy surface of the deep water was still unruffled. Isobel stood looking from the dark still water and the dank, rotting leaves at her feet, up through the thinning branches to the cold sky; then with a sudden wild cry she flung out her hands as if she were desperately trying to dash some obstacle aside.

And in very truth she was. She was vainly beating against that invisible barrier which separated her from her own past, and which held its secret in a grim rilence like that of death itself.

And her cousin Basil could see no reason why she should not be happy! His words, which had seemed full of hope and comfort, now appeared to her changed mood a ghastly mockery. She laughed out and then shivered at the eerie echo which came back to her from the heavy dripping woodhand stillness. Happy, prisoned from her very self by this blank nothingness behind which isome hideous thing might lurk happy, when her own father loved that thing of paint and canvas more than his living child because it reminded him of the past—happy, when the man who must once have loved her, who at least was

couldn't be-it couldn't! She, Isobel Stormont, to love a man who deemed her now unfit to be his wife-how else could his conduct be explained? A cracking of boughs, a plunging rustle through the fallen leaves, and Isobel turned sharply, her eyes bright, her pulses leaping, to face. Evelyn Ashe! The quick spark died from her eyes, the tide of hot color ebbed from her delicate face, as Ashe came dashing through the bushes and accordantly.

cate face, as Ashe came dashing through the bushes and paused with a hasty, half-surprised glance around.
"I fancied I heard a cry, but I must have been mistaken," he said, as he looked doubtfully at the girl standing so pale and still on the brink of the sullen, sluggish water. She did not look the sullen, sluggish water. She did not look like a damsel in distress, but he was certain that he had heard a cry of pain or terror. He, too, knew the mem-

ories which hung thick about this spot—was it possible that they were awaking within her?

"A cry? It must have been fancy, surely," said Isobel. "I at least am in no need of a rescuer today," forcing a smile. "I owe you cults enough at ready."

"You are in need of a word of caution, then," said Ashe, letting her last words pass. "Do you know that you are standing uncomfortably near the edge, and these banks are very treacherous—they are rotten—see," and as Isobel drew away with a careless laugh. he stamped heavily on the overnanging grassy edge and then stepped swiftly

A fissure opened, widened, yawned and A fissure opened, widened, yawned and then" with a quiver, a great clod long undermined by the lapping current sid slowly down into the deep water, which seemed to suck it under and then closed silently over it. Ashe looked at Isobel. She had paled a little.

"Promise me you will be more careful," he urged, and if the words were cold the voice thrilled. Then in a lighter tone. "Who knows—you might have

cold the voice thrilled. Then in a lighter tone, "Who knows-you might have needed a rescuer indeed if you had stood there much longer."

"And you might not have been there," said isobel, gazing with a sort of ascination down into the dark, all-concealing water. "And I might have disappeared-for good this time-and the Alder Pool have deserved the bat reputation it was gaining before I was found again." She stood gazing a moment ionger, as he was watching her, then she turned away with a shiver. "Let us go; I don't like this place; it gives me the creeps. It is strange, isn't it, for I ought to like it. I believe I used to haunt the Round Wood and this river path. I don't know what brought me here today; perhaps I hoped to find myself again." With a dry laugh.

"And have you? I could fancy a place like this would have a strong pull on the's thoughts and memory."

Isobel shook her head. "No, that me seems wholly gone now; I only want to get away," quickening her steps up the narrow path.

"And yet when I first saw you standing by the water's edge," said Asho, "you seemed so akin to this brooding solitude that you might have been the river spirit itself, another White Lady of Avenel, but"—he pauled a moment—"I am glad it is not the you who used to love this place whom I found here

"No; but if I had met your 'old self dreaming by the river today—pardon me for adopting your phrase, but it is very descriptive—I should have met the Miss Stormont whom I saw in London, Mr. Conyers' flancee," with slow deliberation. "No, stop, lot me speak, you think me merely impertinent," as the girl faced round on him on the narrow path with haughty, frozen eyes, and a sudden flame in her cheeks, fire and ice at once. "Let me speak—what harm can it do you to hear what you would sever have heard if it had not been for"—then with a swift change of voice—"I saw you in town, Miss Stormont. Do you think I forgot you? I saw you again on the terrace. I spoke to you, I held your hand—the chance was given me to do you a trifling service—it meant much to me, that moment, hoarsely, "and then that very night in the drawing room, after you had left"—a certain hurry in the vibrating, searching tones—"I heard from your coush himself that you were free"
"My cousin—what did he say—what right had you to talk of me?" demanded Isobel, hotly. That night—the night of the fete—the night when she had joined in Lord Dalguise's song—and Basil had chosen that very night to sever himself openly from her. "It does not matter! It is quite true though—we are not engaged," she added, stiffly, and resuming her rapid walk.

"Stay, I beg you," safd Ashe, stepping before her. They had reached the grassy chole again. "In justice to Mr.



"I fancied I heard a cry, but I m ust have been mistaken,' he said."

"Let us go; I don't like this place; it gives me the creeps. It is strange, isn't it, for I ought to like it. I believe I used to haunt the Round Wood and this river path. I don't know what brought me here today; perhaps I hoped to find myself again," with a dry laugh.

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"Why — do you dislike it, too?" quickly.

"No; but if I had met your 'old self dreaming by the river today—pardon me for adopting your phrase but it is very describitive—I should have me for gown the like the passion-charged voice broke, and the glow kinding within her steps, though something within her steps, though somethi have I to do with it?" faltered Isobel, as the passion-charged voice broke, and the glowing eyes seemed to hang on her answer. She was half-bewildered, half-frightened, and in her inexperience perhaps a little flattered even at this strange, sudden outburst, and for the moment Ashe looked for no more.

"Then I ask one thing more-all I ask yet," he said, with unconscious emphasis on the last word. "Will you believe that if you need help—I cannot explain but ere long you may need it sorely—I am ready. If others fail, before God, I will not. You do not understand me—you cannot remember.

"What do you mean—what is there to remember?" exclaimed Isobel impatiently, and snatching her hands away. In the limpid clearness of her gray eyes there was no hint of consciousness, as ashe perceived. "Why should I need help—I?" her slight figure unconsciously erecting itself. "I must know—you must tell me!" imperiously.

"I cannot," said Ashe, with absolute truth.

"Then who can?" in a flash. "My father?" with a swift pang of premonition.

"Six David can tell you—if he will."

"Sir David can tell you—if he will," said Ashe slowly. "It is not for me, of course, to say whether he ought to or not."

"No, I do not think that it is, said isobel, coldly, recovering herself somewhat from the strange excitement into which Ashe's words had thrown her, and realizing with whom she was discussing the Inmost things of her life. "If there is anything I ought to know, I have no doubt my father will tell me, and though I cannot imagine how I should need any help but his, I am sure that you mean it kindly, and I thank you all the same," and with a slight inclination of her graceful head she was nowing away as if their talk was now at an end.

The girl had in her all the making of a "grand dame," Ashe thought, as he stood for a second swiftly calculating chances. He would risk it. In one stride he was at her side again. Their talk was not over yet.

"Perhaps I am offending again, but have you heard that a little Testament was the only thing in your possession on your return home?"

"Sobel stared. What had this to do with the matter?

"Of course I heard of it," with a look and tone of haughty offense. She had been told of it by Justine, but when she had asked to see it, her mother, she ramembered now, had put the matter about it; let us forget it rather, darling."

"Have you seen it? Has Sir David shown it you?" went on Ashe. For himself, since he had heard of the Testament from Justine, he would have given a year of his life to have the handling of it, "If not—" significantly." "Really, aren't we getting rather melodramatic?" broke in isobel—a word which she had heard of the Testament from Justine, he would have given a year of his life to have the handling of it, "If not—" significantly." "Really, aren't we getting rather mother use, and she was very quick in assimilating new words or new ideas. "What is all this mystery about? You speak as if that poor little Testament were some tallsman—perhaps it is," with a smile. "I shall tell you when I see it," and she turned away, and this time Ashe made no a

here to answer—perhaps that Testament was.

With her breath sobbing in her throat, a wild glitter in her beautiful eyes, she went straight to the big writing table and with trembling hands began in fierce and desperate haste to pull the drawers open. She had no thought of dishonor, she never questioned what she was doing, she was driven by the devouring need—to know. Letters, papers, deeds, she recklessly turned over and threw aside, then as she slammed a drawer to, whether she unknowingly touched the spring, or in his haste in the morning Sir David had not properly closed it—a drawer hitherto unneticed slid slowly out under her hand. With a gasp of fright she stood staring at it. There was some jewelry—rings chiefly, swept together in a little heap, some letters, and—all that she had eyes for—a shabby little black Testament with a brass class! There it was—the impossible had happened!

ment with a brass class! There it was

the impossible had happened!

For a moment her impulse was to
close the drawer, and flee from what
the had done, to forget it if she could,
but with a slow and shrinking hand
she forced herself to lift the listle book.
Why did the sight of it, the very feeling of it in her hand, seem familiar?
Slowly she undid the clasp, looked at
the inscription in its faded ink, at the
torn envelope, at the thick, faded lock
of hair, and stood breathless, rigk.

Then she fell all her slim length upon
the floor, her clutching hands digging
into the thick carpet, as if seeking to
selze and to hold by something stable
as a man, when the roof and walls
which have sheltered him are tottering around him, flings himself instinctively on mother earth only to find in
slok horror that last refuge betraying.
Isim—the solid earth rocking giddily like
the works of his own puny bands

Where was she? What was this—was
this madness? Madness—worse, it was
memory! Memory from which she
could never through life escape again,
from which death itself might have no
power to deliver her.
She struggled up to her knees, and
dashed back the bright, disordered hair
from her face. She struggled up to ner knees, and dashed back the bright, disordered hair from her face.

Looking down upon her agony was a pale face and shrinking wistful eyes—her old self!

She laughed—laughed aloud, for despair has ever laughed at command, though its tears have been scorched dry by the fire that is not quenched. But the horror of it overwhelmed her. She flung out helpless hands.

"Oh, God—oh, God—oh, God."

The thick walls of the great room echoed to a cry, not loud but awful. A cry of one drowning in deep waters, the cry as of one drowning in deep waters, as Death and Despair drag him struggling and agonizing down—and down—and ever down to the depths below.

Sir David came into the library, and, as was fast growing a habit, his eyes sought his daughter's face, looking down upon him from the wall. But beneath it from the hearth a figure rose and turned on him a face of death, save that the eyes burned. The outflung accusing hand clutched a little black book.

"Who am I?" cried a voice that smote. "Tell me—who am I?"

CHAPTER XIX LADY CARRUTHERS RECEIVES.

LADY CARRUTHERS RECEIVES.

OLD Lady Carruthers was sitting by a heaped-up fire in her drawing room, the biggest, squarest room in her big, square old house, which, though it stood in a good-sized park, had only a big, square lawn between it and the high road.

Amid the crowd of chairs and couches, the little crumpled-up figure by the fire might at a first glance have passed unnoticed, but as the door opened and Lady Carruthers looked sharply round, her presence at once dominated her cumbrous surroundings, as completely as it ruled any circle of her acquaintance.

"And what news of Klimeny today?" she asked, briskly, as Ashe entered.

"She is better boadily as Sim told me in a burst of condence," said Ashe, smiling. "Whether he meant to imply anything—that she was not better in some other way, I don't know."

"I wonder they keep that doddering o'd idiot," said Lady Carruthers, wrathfully. In years, Sim might have been her son, but that was of no consequence. "In fact, I have no patience with the way they have mismanaged the whole affair. How did they let the girl fall ill again—have a fit, or whatever it was. They'll make her the talk of the county is immensely sympathetic, meantime. I met haif a dozen acquaintances between here and Stormont."

"The county is immensely sympathetic, meantime. I met haif a dozen acquaintances between here and Stormont." acquaintances between here and stormont."

"Oh, yes." crossly. "They tell me stormont's been like a cried fair, and sim sits behind the door all day, but that won't last. I've told Marian till I'm tired that the one thing to do is to marry the girl. You've always that to your credit, and whatever happens.

afterward-well, you're not responsible for it, and there'd be plenty to take the risk meantime, who might be frightened off by more vagaries. Oho," with a lightning quick glance and a dry laugh. "Is that the game? I thought I'd ask you here just to see what mischief you had on hand, for I knew there was something up You're very clever, Evelyn, too clever at times, but if I were you I think I'd try the possible." "It is not only I who am too clever, think," said Ashe, with a careless

laugh, "but, after all, if one chooses, is anything impossible?" leaning back against the high marble mantelshelf. white once, but now yellowed with the years.

The old lady's eyes ran over the tail. graceful figure and the distinctive face. as if she were appraising them point by

"Not enough, my dear Evelyn," with a judicial summing-up air, "uniess you've got some trump up your sleeve. which would be quite in character. No doubt you think you have. But if there were no other reasons, a Stormont marriage is an affair of high politics arranged long beforehand and, in spite of David's unacountable shilly-snallying, I think they'll pull this one off yet -unless, of course, there is some fresh escapade, for young Conyers' heart is in it now, which I don't think it was at first, and no wonder, for he has flesh and blood to deal with now, not a wellbrought-up shadow. I like the way the lad spoke up the other night. Your have to reckon with him."

"Yes, I'd better begin to lay out my plan of campaign," said Ashe jestingly. when a second time the door opened and "Mr. Conyers" was announced Lady Carruthers broke into one of her elfish laughs, while the two young men exchanged fools, which are an was lishman's usual greeting to friend or acquainance, or even foe.

"You've come very pat, Basil," said the old lady, "but if you'd been beauty

the door a minute souse at a carception to the general rule.

"Much obliged, though I don't know what I've done to deserve it. It's ran-er an exception to your practice, as to the general rule, isn't It's But I darcally and the general rule, isn't some other time, and the general rule, and the general rule, isn't some other time, and the general rule, and the ge

Bonnie Brier Bu

In this age of the dramat it was almost a foregone that somebody would transf stage that charming group Beside the Bonnie Brier Rev. John Watson (lan M however, it is fortunate for ers of the literary and art the dramatization founded t sketches is from the clev James MacArthur, a Scot has tenderly preserved phere which is deemed of chief charms of the Kale-y ies. When the play was fir few persons believed that M drolleries could be staged. the result of MacArthur's tion seems to be a high dy which also contains the ement which has endeared transformation of Lachlan Laren to the reading is the central theme of th of the book, and in comm the New York Journal, part is so fine that if tra art and seems nature

The Bonnie Brier Bush same company is announ attraction at the city hal turn engagement on 10th. Sale of seats opens day, Feb. 5th.

The publisher of the bes writing to us states

"I would say that I do of a medicine that has sto of time like MINARD'S LI It has been an unfailing our household ever since member, and has outlived would-be competitors and

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It is a scientific fact t jority of sciatica cases exposure to cold when the in which the nerve is lit ed. It needs no argum any reasonable person the nerve cannot be fed by tion of a hot iron to the It may deaden the sciat

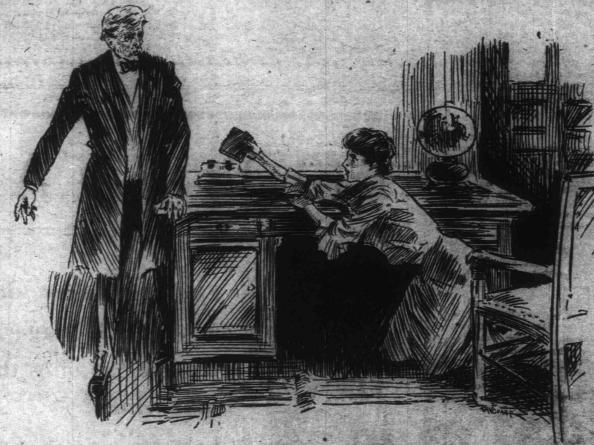
a time but it will not o Absolute rest is the proper medical treatmen Dr. Williams' Pink Pill tually make new blood the starved nerves, wi

Mr. H. W. Awalt

leading merchants of H A few years ago he was ferer from this excrucia He says: "The attack that I had been off time. The cords of 1 all drawn up and I con along with the aid of pain I suffered was terr in misery both day and movement caused me s only those who have with sciatica know. I several doctorsi but help me a bit. In fact, gan to think my condit less, when Dr . William were brought to my a half dozen boxes. entire quantity before efit. But I was enco a second half dozen b fore these were all gone of the trouble disap only this, but I was health in every way, readily understood siege of pain I had su badly run down. I cal highly et Dr. Williams can't recommend them to other sufferers. Sciatica is stubbor

ers for years. Dr. Pills do not simply re They cure the disease watery blood. They new blood and have t ect and powerful cur such diseases as The mia, general debility ects of the grip. As pend upon the blood for Dr. Williams' Pink Pi led for the treatm most severe nervous as neuralgia, partial Vitus dance and lo As a tonic for the b they are used everyw greatest success. bu bodies and bringing health to pale and Sold by all medicine mail at 50c a box o \$2.50 from the Dr. cine Co., Brockville,

treatment and the pat



"From the hearth a figure rose and turned on him a face of death, save that the eyes burned."