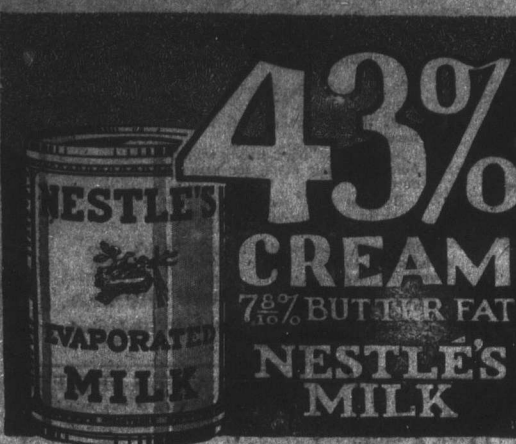


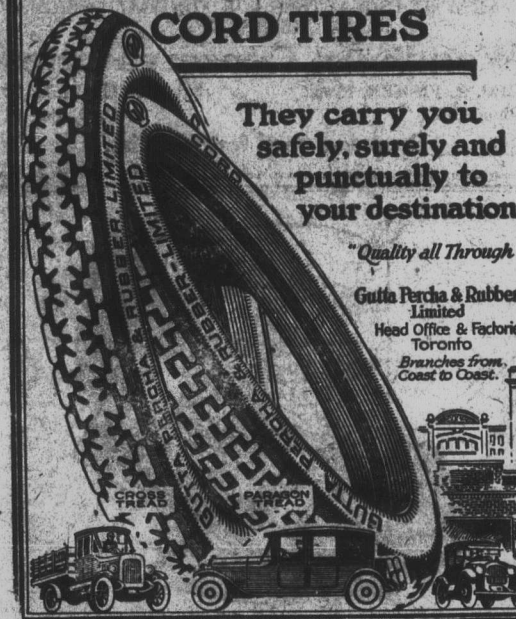
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(continued from last week)  
"That's mostly like a dog what's  
hurt itself," Middleton explained  
equally. "Like a dog that is with a  
touch of the human in its throat, as  
we've all heard in our time, sir. You'll  
hear it yourself, sir, maybe to-night  
or to-morrow night."  
"You've heard it then, Middleton?"  
his master asked.  
"Why, surely, sir," the old man re-  
plied in surprise.  
"Most weeks for the last ten years."  
"Haven't you ever got up and gone  
out to see what it was?"  
The old man shook his head.  
"But I knew right well what that  
was, sir," he said, "and I'm not one  
for looking on spirits. Spirits there  
are that walk this world, as well we  
know, and the spirit of Roger Un-  
thank walks from between the  
Blackwoods and these windows, come  
every week of the year. But I'm  
not for looking at him. There's evil  
comes of that. I turn over in my  
bed, and I stop my ears, but I've  
never yet raised a blind."  
"But I know right well what that  
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bed, and I stop my ears, but I've  
never yet raised a blind."

"Tell me, Middleton," Dominey asked,  
"is Lady Dominey terrified at  
these visitations?"  
"That I can rightly say, sir. Her  
ladyship's always sweet and gentle,  
with kind words on her lips for every  
one, but there's the terror in her  
eyes that was like that night when  
you staggered into the hall, Squire, and  
I've never seen it properly quenched  
yet, so to speak. She carries fear with  
her, but whether it is fear of seeing  
you again, or the fear of Roger Un-  
thank's spirit, I could not tell."  
Dominey seemed suddenly to be-  
come possessed of a strange desire  
to thrust the whole subject away.  
He dismissed the old man kindly but  
abruptly, accompanying him to the cor-  
ridor which led to the servant's quar-  
ters and talking all the time about his  
pleasant. When he returned, he  
found that his guest had emptied his  
second glass of brandy and was sur-  
prisingly mopping his forehead.  
"That," the latter remarked, "is the  
class of old retainers who lives long. If  
I were a Dominey of the Middle Ages  
I think a stone around his neck and  
the deepest well would be the best  
possible way of dealing with him. He  
made me feel positively uncomfortable."

"I noticed it," Dominey remarked,  
with a faint smile. "I'm not going to  
pretend that it was a pleasant con-  
versation myself."  
"I've heard some ghost stories,"  
Mangan went on, "but a spook that  
comes and howls once a week for ten  
years takes some beating."  
Dominey poured himself out a glass  
of brandy with a steady hand.  
"You've been neglecting things here  
Mangan," he complained. "You ought  
to have come down and exercised that  
ghost. We shall have those smart  
malcontents of yours off to-morrow.  
I suppose unless you and I can get  
a little ghost-laying in first."  
Mangan began to feel more  
comfortable. The brandy and the warmth  
of the burning logs were creeping into  
his system.  
"By the by, Sir Everard," he en-  
quired, a little later on, "where are  
you going to sleep to-night?"  
Dominey stretched himself out  
composely.

There is obviously only one place  
for me," he replied. "I can't disappoint  
any one. I shall sleep in the oak room."

**CHAPTER X**  
For the first few tangled moments  
of nightmare, slowly developing into  
a live horror, Dominey fancied himself  
back in Africa, with the hand of an  
enemy upon his throat. Then a rush  
of awakened memories—the silence  
of the great house, the mysterious rust-  
ling of the heavy hangings around the  
black oak four-poster on which he lay,  
the faint pricking of something dead-  
ly at his throat—these things rolled  
back the curtain of unreality, brought  
him acute and painful consciousness of  
his situation almost appalling. He opened  
his eyes, and although a brave and  
callous man he lay still, paralyzed with  
the fear which forbids motion.  
The dim light of a candle, recently lit,  
flushed upon the deadly, appalling, cur-  
tain at his throat. He gazed at the  
thin line of gleaming steel, fascinated.  
Already his skin had been broken, a  
few drops of blood were upon the col-  
lar of his pyjamas. The hand which  
held that deadly, assailing weapon—  
small, slim, very feminine, curving  
from somewhere behind the bed cur-  
tain—belonged to some unseen person.  
He tried to shrink farther back upon  
the pillow. The hand followed him,  
displaying glimpses now of a soft,  
white-sleeved arm. He lay quite still,  
the muscles of his right arm grow-  
ing tense as he prepared for a clutch  
at those cruel fingers. Then a voice—  
a low, feminine and rather wonderful  
voice.  
"If you move," it said, "you will  
die. Remain quite still."  
Dominey was fully conscious now,  
his brain at work, calculating the  
chances with all the cunning of the  
trained hunter who seeks to avoid  
death. Reluctantly he was compelled  
to realize that no movement of his  
could be quick enough to prevent the  
driving of that thin stiletto into his  
throat at his Master's command should  
he move.

"That's mostly like a dog what's  
hurt itself," Middleton explained  
equally. "Like a dog that is with a  
touch of the human in its throat, as  
we've all heard in our time, sir. You'll  
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comes of that. I turn over in my  
bed, and I stop my ears, but I've  
never yet raised a blind."

look at you."

A little wider the crack opened, and  
then he began to feel hope. The hand  
which held the stiletto was shaking,  
he heard something which sounded like  
quick breathing from behind the cur-  
tain—the breathing of a woman as-  
tonished or terrified—and then, so  
suddenly that for several seconds he  
could not move or take advantage of  
the circumstance, the hand with its  
cruel weapon was withdrawn around  
the curtain and a woman began to  
laugh softly at first, and then with a  
little hysterical sob thrusting its way  
through that incongruous note of  
mirth.

He lay upon the bed as though mes-  
merized, finding at his effort that  
his limbs refused their office, as might  
the limbs of one lying under the thrall  
of a nightmare. The laugh died away,  
there was a sound like a scraping  
upon the wall, the candle was suddenly  
blown out. Then his nerve began to  
return and with it his control over his  
limbs. He crawled to the side of the  
bed remote from the curtain, stole to  
the little table on which he had left  
his revolver and an electric torch,  
snatched at them, and with the former  
in his right hand, flashed a little orb  
of light into the shadows of the great  
apartment. Once more something like  
terror seized him. The figure which  
had been standing by the side of his  
bed had vanished. There was no hid-  
ing place in view. Every inch of the  
room was lit up by the powerful torch  
he carried, and, save for himself, the  
room was empty. The first moment of  
realization was chill and unnerving.  
Then the slight smarting of the wound  
at his throat became convincing proof  
to him that there was nothing super-  
natural about this visit. He lit up  
half-a-dozen of the candles distributed  
about the place and laid down his  
torch. He was ashamed to find that  
his forehead was dripping with perspi-  
ration.

"One of the secret passages, of  
course," he muttered to himself, stop-  
ping for a moment to examine the  
locked, folding doors which separated  
his room from the adjoining one.  
"Perhaps, when one reflects, I have  
run unnecessary risks."  
Dominey was standing at the win-  
dow, looking out at the tumbled grey  
waters of the North Sea, when Park-  
ins brought him hot water and tea in  
the morning, thrust his feet into his  
slippers and held out his arms for a  
dressing-gown.

"Find out where the nearest bath-  
room is, Parkins," he ordered, "and  
prepare it. I have quite forgotten my  
way about here."  
"Very good, sir,"  
The man was motionless for a  
moment, staring at the blood on his  
master's pyjamas. Dominey glanced  
down at it and turned the dressing-  
gown up to his throat.  
"I had a slight accident this morn-  
ing," he remarked carelessly. "Any  
ghost alarms last night?"  
"Very terrible, was it?" the man  
replied. "I am afraid we should have  
difficulty in keeping the young women  
from London, if they heard what I  
heard the night of my arrival."

Parkins' expression remained immov-  
able. There was in his tone, how-  
ever, a mute protest against his  
master's levity.  
"The cries were the most terrible I  
have ever heard, sir," he said. "I am  
not a nervous person, but I found  
them most disturbing."  
"A mixture of both, I should say,  
Sir."  
"You should camp out for the night  
on the skirts of an African forest,"  
Dominey remarked. "There you get a  
whole orchestra of wild animals, every  
one of them trying to freeze your  
blood up."

"I was put in South Africa during  
the Boer War, sir," Parkins replied.  
"I went big game hunting with my  
master afterwards. I do not think  
that any animal was ever born in  
Africa with so terrifying a cry as we  
heard the night before last."  
"What was it?" Dominey asked.  
"I have already prepared a bath,  
sir, at the end of the corridor," the  
man answered. "If you will allow me,  
I will show you the way."

Dominey, when he descended about  
an hour later, found his guest await-  
ing him in a smaller dining-room  
which looked out eastward towards the  
sea, a lofty apartment with great  
windows and with an air of faded  
splendour which came from the wall.  
Mr. Mangan had, contrary to his ex-  
pectations, slow, well and was in ex-  
cellent spirits. The row of silver dishes  
upon the sideboard inspired him with  
an added cheerfulness.  
"So there were no ghosts walking  
last night, eh?" he remarked, as he  
took his place at the table.  
"Wonderful thing this absolute  
quiet is after London. Give you my  
word, I never heard a sound from the  
moment my head touched the pillow  
until I woke a short while ago."  
Dominey returned from the side-  
board, carrying a small well-filled plate.  
"Hazy slipped," Dominey told him.  
"You got out of use of those things  
in Africa."  
"You've managed to give yourself a  
nasty gash," Mr. Mangan observed  
curiously.  
"Parkins is going to send up for a  
new set of safety razors for me," Do-  
miney announced. "About our plans  
for the day, I've ordered the car  
two-thirty this afternoon, if that suits  
you. We can look around the place  
quietly this morning. Mr. Johnson is  
sleeping over at a farmhouse near here.  
We shall pick him up en route. And I  
have told Lew, the bailiff, to come  
with us too."

Mr. Mangan nodded his approval.  
"Upon my word," he confessed, "it  
will be a joy to me to go and see some  
of these fellows without having to put  
me off about repairs and that sort of  
thing. Johnson has had the worst of  
it, poor chap, but there are one or two  
of them that took it into their heads  
to come up to London and worry me  
at the office."  
"I intend that there shall be no  
more dissatisfaction amongst my  
tenants."  
Mr. Mangan set off for another  
prowl towards the sideboard.  
"Satisfied tenants you never will get  
Norfolk," he declared. "I must admit,  
though, that some of them have had  
cause to grumble lately. There's a fel-  
low round by Wells who farms nearly  
eight hundred acres—"

He broke off in his speech. There  
was a knock at the door, not an or-  
dinary knock at all, but a measured,  
deliberate tapping, three times repeat-  
ed.  
"Come in," Dominey called out.  
Mrs. Unthank entered, severe, more  
unattractive than ever in the hard  
morning light. She came to the end of  
the table, facing the place where Do-  
miney was seated.  
"Good morning, Mrs. Unthank,"  
he said.  
She ignored his greeting.  
"I am the bearer of a message," she  
announced.  
"Pray deliver it," Dominey replied.  
"Her ladyship would be glad for you  
to visit her in her apartment at once."  
Dominey leaned back in his chair.  
His eyes were fixed upon the face of  
the woman whose antagonism to him-  
self was so apparent. She stood in the  
path of a lone gleam of morning sun-  
light. The wrinkles in her face, her  
hard mouth, her cold, steely eyes were  
all clearly revealed.  
"I am not at all sure," he said, with  
a purpose in his words, "that any fur-  
ther meeting between Lady Dominey  
and myself is at present desirable."  
If he had thought to disturb this  
messenger by his suggestion, he was  
disappointed.  
"Her ladyship desires me to assure  
you," she added, with a note of con-  
tempt in her tone, "that you need be  
under no apprehension."  
Dominey admitted defeat and poured  
himself out some more coffee.  
Neither of the two noticed that his  
fingers were trembling.

(continued next week)

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dren playing made me  
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not get away from  
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