

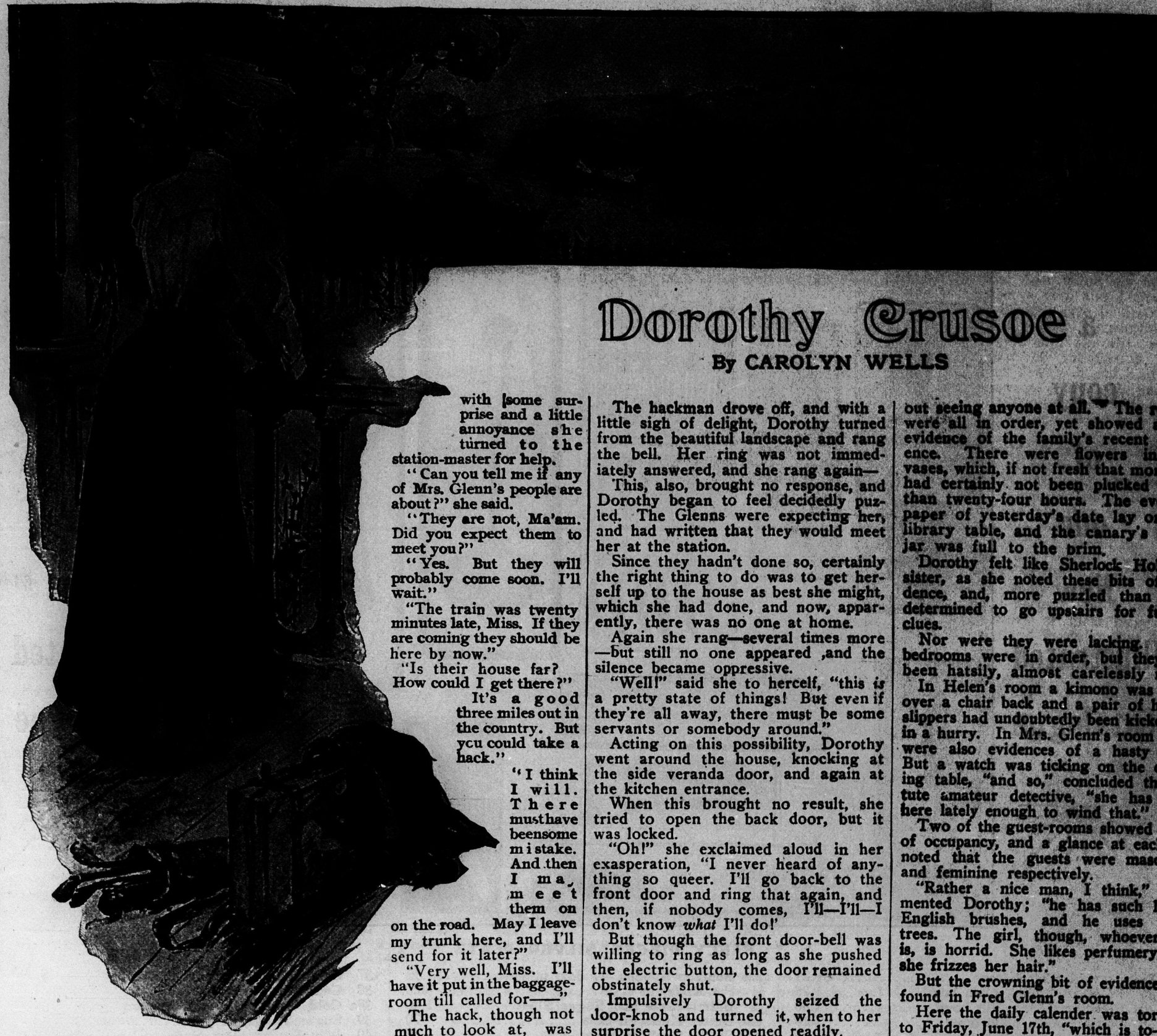


# THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY

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## Dorothy Crusoe

By CAROLYN WELLS

with some surprise and a little annoyance she turned to the station-master for help.

"Can you tell me if any of Mrs. Glenn's people are about?" she said.

"They are not, Ma'am. Did you expect them to meet you?"

"Yes. But they will probably come soon. I'll wait."

"The train was twenty minutes late, Miss. If they are coming they should be here by now."

"Is their house far? How could I get there?"

"It's a good three miles out in the country. But you could take a hack."

"I think I will. There must have been some mistake. And then I must meet them on the road. May I leave my trunk here, and I'll send for it later?"

"Very well, Miss. I'll have it put in the baggage-room till called for."

The hack, though not much to look at, was comfortable enough and Dorothy, after an almost sleepless night on the train, was willing to close her eyes to the three miles of scenery, and only opened them to find herself under the porte-cochère of a large country house.

Jumping out, she paid the driver and dismissed him, and then paused a moment on the veranda before ringing the door-bell.

The view was of the very kind that suited her best. She had an innate love of pure color, and the morning sky was true cobalt, the trees a clear, bright green, and across the smooth gray of the river she could see the distant purple hills.

The hackman drove off, and with a little sigh of delight, Dorothy turned from the beautiful landscape and rang the bell. Her ring was not immediately answered, and she rang again—

This, also, brought no response, and Dorothy began to feel decidedly puzzled. The Glens were expecting her, and had written that they would meet her at the station.

Since they hadn't done so, certainly the right thing to do was to get herself up to the house as best she might, which she had done, and now, apparently, there was no one at home.

Again she rang—several times more—but still no one appeared, and the silence became oppressive.

"Well!" said she to herself, "this is a pretty state of things! But even if they're all away, there must be some servants or somebody around."

Acting on this possibility, Dorothy went around the house, knocking at the side veranda door, and again at the kitchen entrance.

When this brought no result, she tried to open the back door, but it was locked.

"Oh!" she exclaimed aloud in her exasperation, "I never heard of anything so queer. I'll go back to the front door and ring that again, and then, if nobody comes, I'll—I'll—I don't know what I'll do!"

But though the front door-bell was willing to ring as long as she pushed the electric button, the door remained obstinately shut.

Impulsively Dorothy seized the door-knob and turned it, when to her surprise the door opened readily.

"Well of all the things!" she cried. "But, at least there must be somebody at home, or the front door would have been locked."

She stood in the hall, listening, but heard no sound of any kind.

"Helen!" she called at last, "Helen, where are you?"

Still no answer, and she was forced to the conclusion that the house was empty of any human beings save herself.

Her curiosity being aroused, and having, moreover, a practical mind, she concluded to make a systematic search. She closed the front door, and went through the parlors, library, dining-room, and even kitchen, with-

out seeing anyone at all. The rooms were all in order, yet showed ample evidence of the family's recent presence. There were flowers in the vases, which, if not fresh that morning, had certainly not been plucked more than twenty-four hours. The evening paper of yesterday's date lay on the library table, and the canary's seed-jar was full to the brim.

Dorothy felt like Sherlock-Holmes's sister, as she noted these bits of evidence, and, more puzzled than ever, determined to go upstairs for further clues.

Nor were they were lacking. The bedrooms were in order, but they had been hastily, almost carelessly made.

In Helen's room a kimono was flung over a chair back and a pair of house-slippers had undoubtedly been kicked off in a hurry. In Mrs. Glenn's room there were also evidences of a hasty exit.

But a watch was ticking on the dressing table, "and so," concluded the astute amateur detective, "she has been here lately enough to wind that."

Two of the guest-rooms showed signs of occupancy, and a glance at each denoted that the guests were masculine and feminine respectively.

"Rather a nice man, I think," commented Dorothy; "he has such lovely English brushes, and he uses shoe-trees. The girl, though, whoever she is, is horrid. She likes perfumery, and she frizzes her hair."

But the crowning bit of evidence was found in Fred Glenn's room.

Here the daily calendar was torn off to Friday, June 17th, "which is to-day," announced Dorothy, with great satisfaction, "and which proves conclusively that the whole family decamped this morning. I know Fred Glenn's methodical habits, and he tore off yesterday's calendar slip either this morning or very late last night. Now I've got clues enough, but I can't puzzle the thing out."

"They expected me to-day, and even if anything occurred to make them fly off suddenly somewhere, I can't see why the servants should go, too. And if they did, I can't see why they didn't look the front door. It's mighty queer any way you look at it. I feel like Robinson Crusoe, stranded on a desert island. I never before appre-

THAT her name wasn't really Dorothy Crusoe was proved by the D. L. on the trunk which was tumbled out of the baggage car at the same time that the young lady was ceremoniously assisted down the train steps by an obsequious porter.

She had never been in Maplewood before, but the bustle about the little station seemed to indicate a flourishing and wide-awake, if small community.

There were several traps and automobiles waiting at the platform, and Dorothy looked at them eagerly in search of the friends who were to meet her on her arrival.

But she saw none of the Glens, and