

The Blind Man's Eyes

(Continued from page 29.)

him; she felt instinctively that he had been facing, when this picture was taken, that injustice which had changed him into the self-controlled, watchful man that she had known.

So, as she contrasted this man with the boy that he had been, her love and sympathy for him nearly overpowered her. She clutched the picture to her, pressed it against her cheek; then suddenly conscious that her emotion might be audible to her father, she quickly controlled herself.

"What is it you want to know, Father?" she asked.

"You have answered me already what I was going to ask, my dear," he said to her quietly.

"What, Father?"

"That is the picture of Eaton?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

SHE tried to assure herself of the meaning in her father's tone; but she could not. She understood that her recognition of the picture had satisfied him in regard to something over which he had been in doubt; but whether this was to work in favour of Hugh and herself—she thought of herself now inseparably with Hugh—or whether it threatened them, she could not tell.

"Father, what does this mean?" she cried to him.

"What, dear?"

"Your having the picture. Where did you get it?"

Her father made no reply; she repeated it till he granted, "I knew where it might be. I sent for it."

"But—but, Father—" It came to her now that her father must know who Hugh was. "Who—"

"I know who he is now," her father said calmly. "I will tell you when I can."

"When you can?"

"Yes," he said. He was still an instant; she waited. "Where is Avery?" he asked her, as though his mind had gone to another subject instantly.

"He has not been in, I believe, since noon."

"He is overseeing the search for Eaton?"

"Yes."

"Send for him. Tell him I wish to see him here at the house; he is to remain within the house until I have seen him."

Something in her father's tone startled and perplexed her; she thought of Donald now only as the most eager and most vindictive of Eaton's pursuers. Was her father removing Donald from among those seeking Eaton? Was he sending for him because what he had just learned was something which would make more rigorous and desperate the search? The blind man's look and manner told her nothing.

"You mean Donald is to wait here until you send for him, Father?"

"That is it."

It was the blind man's tone of dismissal. He seemed to have forgotten the picture; at least, as his daughter moved toward the door, he gave no direction concerning it. She halted, looking back at him. She would not carry the picture away, secretly, like this. She was not ashamed of her love for Eaton; whatever might be said or thought of him, she trusted him; she was proud of her love for him.

"May I take the picture?" she asked steadily.

"Do whatever you want with it," her father answered quietly.

And so she took it with her. She found a servant of whom she inquired for Avery; he had not returned, so she sent for him. She went down to the deserted library and waited there with the picture of Hugh in her hand. The day had drawn to dusk. She could no longer see the picture in the fading light; she could only recall it; and now, as she recalled it, the picture itself—not her memory of her father's manner in relation to it—gave her vague discomfort. She got up suddenly, switched on the light and, holding the picture close to it, studied it. What it was in the picture that gave her this strange uneasiness quite separate and distinct from all that she

had felt when she first looked at it, she could not tell; but the more she studied it, the more troubled and frightened she grew.

The picture was a plain, unretouched print pasted upon common square cardboard without photographer's emboss or signature; and printed with the picture were four plain, distinct numerals—8253. She did not know what they meant or if they had any real significance, but somehow now she was more afraid for Hugh than she had been. She trembled as she held the picture again to her cheek and then to her lips.

She turned; some one had come in from the hall; it was Donald. He was in riding clothes and was disheveled and dusty from leading the men on horseback through the woods. She saw at her first glance at him that his search had not yet succeeded, and she threw her head back in relief. Donald seemed to have returned without meeting the servant sent for him and, seeing the light, he had looked into the library idly; but when he saw her, he approached her quickly.

"What have you there?" he demanded of her.

She flushed at the tone. "What right have you to ask?" Her instant impulse had been to conceal the picture, but that would make it seem she was ashamed of it; she held it so Donald could see it if he looked. He did look and suddenly seized the picture from her.

"Don!" she cried at him.

He stared at the picture and then up at her. "Where did you get this, Harry?"

"Don!"

"Where did you get it?" he repeated. "Are you ashamed to say?"

"Ashamed! Father gave it to me!"

"Your father!" Avery started; but if anything had caused him apprehension, it instantly disappeared. "Then didn't he tell you who this man Eaton is?"

His tone terrified her, made her confused; she snatched for the picture, but he held it from her. "Didn't he tell you what this picture is?"

"What?" she repeated.

"What did he say to you?"

"He got the picture and had me see it; he asked me if it was—Mr. Eaton. I told him yes."

"And then didn't he tell you who Eaton was?" Avery iterated.

"What do you mean, Don?"

He put the picture down on the table beside him and, as she rushed for it, he seized both her hands and held her before him. "Harry, dear!" he said to her. "Harry, dear—"

"Don't call me that! Don't speak to me that way!"

"Why not?"

"I don't want you to."

"Why not?"

She struggled to free herself from him.

"I know, of course," he said. "It's because of him." He jerked his head toward the picture on the table; the manner made her furious.

"Let me go, Don!"

"I'm sorry, dear." He drew her to him, held her only closer.

"Don; Father wants to see you! He wanted to know when you came in; he will let you know when you can go to him."

"When did he tell you that?"

"Just now."

"When he gave you the picture?"

"Yes."

AVERY had almost let her go; now he held her hand again. "Then he wanted me to tell you about this Eaton."

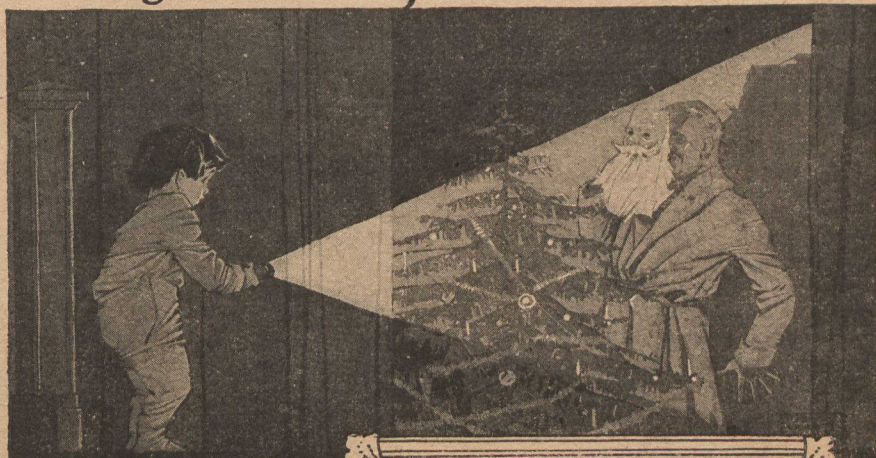
"Why should he have you tell me about—Mr. Eaton?"

"You know!" he said to her.

She shrank and turned her head away and shut her eyes not to see him. And he was the man whom, until some strange moment a few days ago, she had supposed she was some time to marry. Amazement burned through her now at the thought; because this man had been well looking, fairly interesting and amusing, and got on well both with her father and herself, and because he cared for her she

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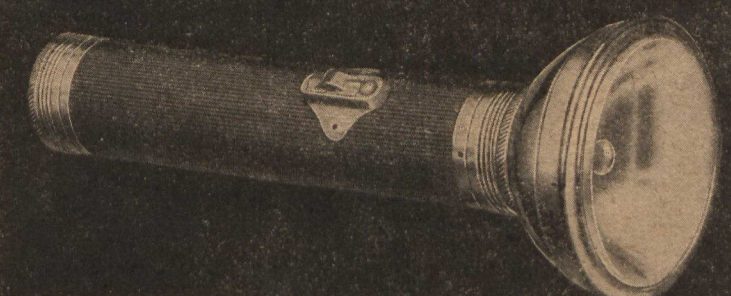
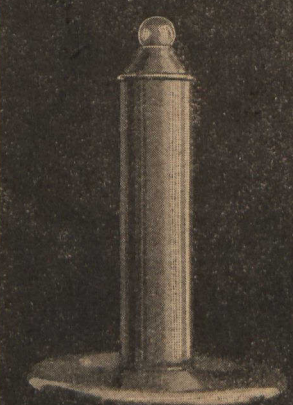
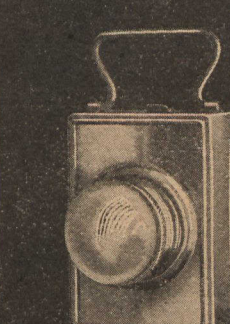
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