

The BLACK BOX by E. Phillips Oppenheim SEE THE MOVING PICTURES CORRESPONDING WITH THIS INSTALLMENT IN PALACE THEATRE, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, THIS WEEK.

SYNOPSIS

Sanford Quest, master criminologist of the world, finds that in bringing to justice Macdougall, the murderer of Lord Ashleigh's daughter, he has but just started a life-and-death struggle with a mysterious master criminal. In a hidden hut in Professor Ashleigh's garden he has seen an anthropoid ape skeleton and a living inhuman creature, half monkey, half man, destroyed by fire. In his rooms at intervals have appeared from nowhere two black boxes with sarcastic and threatening notes signed with a pair of armless, threatening hands, representing those which have already figured in a diamond robbery. Sarah, his secretary, kills Laura, and his assistant, Lenora, he follows the trail of Macdougall, who escaped on his way to prison, and finds Macdougall's dead body in a cave on a lonely hillside. After a thrilling escape from two thugs who try to kill him he returns to his rooms to find his valet, Rosa Brown, and the Queen murdered, and Police Inspector French investigating. French, puzzled, half suspects Quest of the crime.

FIFTH INSTALLMENT ON THE RACK.

CHAPTER XII. For the moment no element had been introduced into the horror of the little tableau. All eyes were fixed upon Quest, who listened to the inspector's dubious words with a supercilious smile upon his lips. "Perhaps," he suggested, "you would like to ask me a few questions?" "Perhaps I may feel it my duty to do so," the inspector replied gravely. "In the first place, then, Mr. Quest, will you kindly explain the condition of your clothes?" Quest shrugged his shoulders. "Here you are, then," he replied. "This morning I decided to make an attempt to clear up the mystery of Macdougall's disappearance. I sent on my secretary, Miss Laura, to make friends with the section boss, and Lenora and I went out by automobile a little later. We instituted a search on a new principle, and before very long we found Macdougall's body. That's one up against you, I think, inspector." "Very likely," the inspector observed. "Go on, please." "I left the two young ladies, at Miss Lenora's wish, to superintend the removal of the body. I myself had an engagement to deliver over her jewels to Mrs. Rheinholdt here at midday. I returned to where my automobile was waiting, started for the city and was attacked by two thugs near the section house. I got away from them, ran to the tower house to try and stop the freight, was followed by the thugs, and jumped out on to the last car from the signal arm." "Where is your automobile?" "No idea," Quest replied. "I left it in the road. When I jumped from the freight car I took a taxicab to the professor's and called for him, as arranged." The inspector nodded. "I shall have to ask you to excuse me for a moment," he said, "while I ring up number ten signal tower. If Mr. Quest's story receives corroboration the matter is at an end." The inspector left the room almost immediately. When he returned he was looking graver than ever. "Quest," he announced, "your alibi is useless—in fact, a little worse than useless. The operator at number ten has been found murdered at the back of the tower!" Quest started. "I ought not to have left him to those thugs," he murmured regretfully. "There is no automobile of yours in the vicinity," the inspector continued, "nor any news of it. I think it will be as well now, Quest, for this matter to take its obvious course. Will you, first of all, hand over her jewels to Mrs. Rheinholdt?" Quest drew the keys of the safe from his pocket, crossed the room and swung open the safe door. For a moment afterwards he stood transfixed. His arm half outstretched, remained motionless. Then he turned slowly around. "The jewels have been stolen," he announced with unnatural calm. The inspector laid his hand heavily upon Quest's shoulder. "You will kindly consider yourself under arrest, Quest. Ladies and gentlemen, will you clear the room now, if you please. The ambulance I telephoned for is outside." The professor, who had been looking as though dazed, suddenly intervened. "Mr. French," he said earnestly, "I am convinced that you are making a great mistake. In arresting and taking away Mr. Quest you are removing from us the one man who is likely to be able to clear up this mystery." The inspector pushed him gently to one side. "You will excuse me, professor," he

could do. She took no notice of the chair to which he pointed, and rested her hand upon his shoulder. "Professor," she begged, "go and see Mr. Quest! He is in the Tombs prison. It would be the kindest thing anyone could possibly do." The professor glanced regretfully at his manuscript, but he did not hesitate. He rose promptly to his feet. "If you think he would appreciate it, I will go at once," he decided. Her face shone with gratitude. "That is really kind of you, professor," she declared.

"I will send for my coat and we will go together, if you like," he suggested. She smiled. "I am going the other way, back to Georgia square," she explained. "No, please don't ring. I can find my own way out." She hurried from the room. Outside in the hall she stood for a moment, listening with beating heart. By the side wall was a hat rack with branching pegs, from which several coats were hanging. She slipped quietly behind their shelter. A moment or two later she heard the professor leave the house. Very cautiously she stole out from her hiding place. The hall was empty. She slipped it with noiseless footsteps, crossed into the study, and moved stealthily to the fireplace. There was a little heap of ashes in one distinct spot. She gathered them up in her handkerchief and secreted it in her dress and quietly left the house.

At Georgia square she found Laura waiting for her, and a few minutes afterward the two girls were examining the ashes with the aid of Quest's microscope. Among the little pile was one fragment at the sight of which they both exclaimed. It was distinctly a shred of charred muslin embroidery. Lenora pointed toward it triumphantly. "Isn't that evidence?" she demanded. "Let's ring up Inspector French!" Laura shook her head doubtfully. "Not so fast," she advised. "French is a good sort in his way, but he's prejudiced just now against the boss. I'm not sure that this evidence would go far by itself." "It's evidence enough for us to go to Craig, though! What we have got to do is to get a confession out of him somehow!" Laura studied her companion, for a moment, curiously. "What's your interest in Mr. Quest, kid, ain't you?" Lenora looked up. Then her head suddenly sank into her hands. She knew quite well that her secret had escaped her. Laura patted her shoulder. "That's all right, child," she said soothingly. "We'll see him through this, somehow or other." "Laura," exclaimed Lenora, "we will save Mr. Quest and we will get hold of Craig! I have a plan. Listen!"

CHAPTER XIII. Craig's surprise was real enough as he opened the back door of the professor's house on the following morning and found Lenora standing on the threshold. Lenora smiled pleasantly. "I came to this door," she said. "Because I wanted a little talk with you." Craig's attitude was perfect. He was mystified but he remained respectful. "Will you come inside?" he invited. She shook her head. "I am afraid," she confessed, "of what I am going to say being overheard. Come with me down to the garage for a moment." He opened the doors of the garage, leaving the keys in the lock, and they both passed inside. "You can say what you please here without the slightest fear of being overheard, miss," Craig remarked. Lenora nodded, and breathed a prayer to herself. She was nearer the door than Craig by about half a dozen paces. Her hand groped in the little bag she was carrying and gripped something hard. She clenched her teeth for a moment. Then the automatic pistol flashed out through the gloom. "Craig," she threatened, "if you move I shall shoot you." It seemed as though the man were a coward. He began to tremble, his lips twitched, his eyes grew larger and rounder. "What is it?" he faltered. "What do you want?" "Just this," Lenora said firmly. "I suspect you to be guilty of the crime for which Sanford Quest is in prison. I am going to have you questioned. If you are innocent you have nothing to fear. If you are guilty there will be someone here before long who will extract the truth from you." The man's face was an epitome of terror. Even his knees shook. Lenora felt herself grow calmer with every moment. "I am going outside to send a message," she told him. "I shall return presently." "Don't go," he begged suddenly. "Don't leave me! I am innocent. I have done nothing wrong. If you keep me here, you will do more harm than you can dream of." "It is for other people to decide about your innocence," Lenora said calmly. "I have nothing to do with that. If you are wise you will stop here quietly."

"Have you said anything to Mr. Ashleigh, miss?" the man asked piteously. "Not a word." A expression of relief shone for a moment upon his face. Lenora pointed to a stool. "Sit down there and wait quietly," she ordered. He obeyed without a word. She left the place, scarcely one hour securely, and made her way round to the other side of the garage—the side hidden from the house. Here, at the far corner, she drew a little pocket wireless from her bag and set it on the window sill. Very slowly she sent her message: "I have Craig here in the professor's garage, locked up. If our plan has succeeded, come at once. I am waiting for you." There was no reply. She sent the message again and again. Suddenly, during a pause, there was a little flash upon the plate. A message was coming to her. She transcribed it with beating heart: "O. K. Coming."

The guard swung open the wicket in front of Quest's cell. "Young woman to see you, Quest," he announced. "Ten minutes, and no loud talking, please." Quest moved to the bars. It was Laura who stood there. She wasted very little time in preliminaries. Having satisfied herself that the guard was out of hearing, she leaned as close as she could to Quest. "Look here," she said, "Lenora's crazy with the idea that Craig has done these jobs—Craig, the professor's servant, you know. We used the phototelesma yesterday afternoon and saw him burn something in the professor's study. Lenora went up straight away and got hold of the ashes." "Smart girl," Quest murmured, nodding approvingly. "Well?" "There are distinct fragments," Laura continued, "of embroidered stuff such as the Salvation Army girl might have been wearing. We put them on one side, but they ain't enough evidence. Lenora's idea is that you should get hold of Craig and hypnotize him into a confession." "That's all right," Quest replied. "but how am I to get hold of him?" Laura glanced once more carelessly around where the guard stood. "I am afraid," she confessed, "of what I am going to say being overheard. Come with me down to the garage for a moment." He opened the doors of the garage, leaving the keys in the lock, and they both passed inside. "You can say what you please here without the slightest fear of being overheard, miss," Craig remarked. Lenora nodded, and breathed a prayer to herself. She was nearer the door than Craig by about half a dozen paces. Her hand groped in the little bag she was carrying and gripped something hard. She clenched her teeth for a moment. Then the automatic pistol flashed out through the gloom. "Craig," she threatened, "if you move I shall shoot you." It seemed as though the man were a coward. He began to tremble, his lips twitched, his eyes grew larger and rounder. "What is it?" he faltered. "What do you want?" "Just this," Lenora said firmly. "I suspect you to be guilty of the crime for which Sanford Quest is in prison. I am going to have you questioned. If you are innocent you have nothing to fear. If you are guilty there will be someone here before long who will extract the truth from you." The man's face was an epitome of terror. Even his knees shook. Lenora felt herself grow calmer with every moment. "I am going outside to send a message," she told him. "I shall return presently." "Don't go," he begged suddenly. "Don't leave me! I am innocent. I have done nothing wrong. If you keep me here, you will do more harm than you can dream of." "It is for other people to decide about your innocence," Lenora said calmly. "I have nothing to do with that. If you are wise you will stop here quietly."

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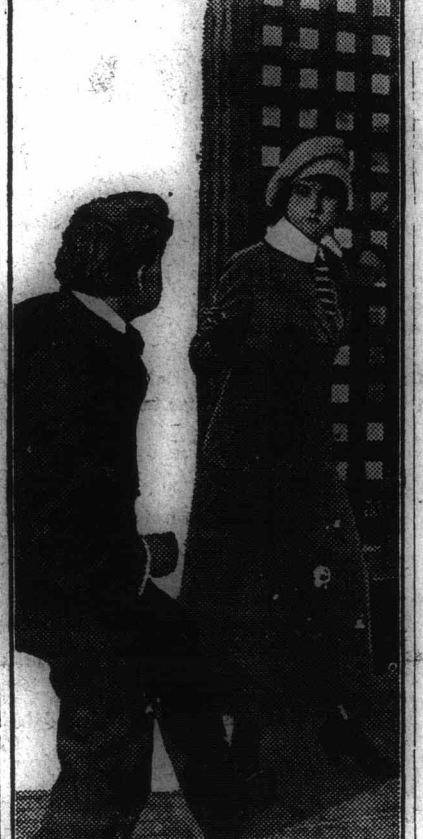
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Long years ago when the world was young, And Angels, their Hosannas sung, Because a world had builded been, And in the fairest spot of earth, God gave to Adam wondrous birth A garden, planned by mind divine, Symphony of colorings to entwine. And to that home so lovely fair, He led our earth's first parents there They, premiers of our human race; Knew what it was to see God's face. We hear His voice when conscience speaks, And when our heart in sorrow breaks But dimmed by sin, through ages gone, We see not wondrous Face that shone. The dazzling light our eyes would gaze, To see the One of ancient days. And sin did send our parents forth: Their descendant toll throughout the earth. And, lo, to-day war's gracious arise, From ancient Eden to God's skies, The old Euphbrates ne'er has seen, For never have such battles been. The Turko-German forces fight, While Britain struggles for the right, The Lake of Galilee doth hear The moans the winds do whistle bear Capernaum's ruin: Who shall say, Or know, when comes the end of day! Those Cities of which our Bible speak. Now 'neath the mighty cannons break They fall—beneath the debris lie: Surely the Angels and listening, sigh. But when shall come our Lord again? Who, crucified, died there in pain. We do not know, and none may say. But in the East—behold some day, In glory, and in might, He'll come, And view despoiled His ancient home. And shall we cowardly, stay here, While Right doth call for soldiers there? What judgment shall you hear that day? You, who are men, give answer—say, Treasure your relics in church's shrine, The Huns' destroying bullets whine; The land's made desolate where Jesus talked, And with the Mother of Sorrows walked. An Original Poem by Alice Pyne McDevitt, Foxboro, Ont.

Our Garden of Eden

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