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THE ALIBI

BY
Geo. Allan England

Author of "Darkness and Dawn," "Beyond the Great Oblivion," "The Empire in the Air," "The Golden Blight," "The After-Glow," "The Crime-Detector," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Starting with wide blue eyes that peered through the little space between the curtains, listening so intently that he forgot to breathe, the wreck of a man—maimed, scarred, clipped, and in vile rags—stood there peering out to see the beautiful and gracious woman that had once promised herself to him.

To see her—aye! And hear her, too, for just a moment, a brief, heart-wrenching moment, before the final scene of the tragedy should be acted and the mocking hand of Fate should signal:

"All lights out!" Arthur knew at once that End and of the maid had spoken. Their evening at an end, their call probably terminated by the announcement of an urgent case in the office, now they were on their homeward way.

Arthur grasped the significance of that splendid lighthouse at the door. He recalled it now. It was the very same in which he in better days had ridden with the girl. A swift thought of himself riding there now with her in his present wounded, hunted, desperate plight, filled his cup of bitterness to the brim and spilled it over. Oceans, worlds, and universes lay between them now—between that woman and himself, between all that had been and all that was or could be.

Chamberlain was speaking, his voice strangely tremulous and aged, already "turning again forward childish trouble." In that voice the fugitive clearly understood how the tragic hand of Fate had broken the old man. And now, glimpsing his bent figure stiffly coming down the stairs, that kindly face still framed in the magnificent white mane of hair, Arthur felt a pang at realizing how old Chamberlain must have suffered—all for the dead and execrated Slayton's evil deed.

"A bit too strong for me to-night, doctor," the old man was saying regretfully. "Just a little bit too strong. That was a smashing attack at the end with both rooks, the bishop, and the queen. Double check. Impossible situation. Either your play is improving or mine's going back."

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year ago—no, sir! You couldn't have got me into a corner like that!"

The doctor laughed dryly. "Your variant of the guoco piano was hardly successful," he answered. "It cramped your play. You didn't develop your pieces early enough in the game. Personally I prefer the Ruy Lopez. A great gambit, that! Better luck next time, Chamberlain. You'll have your revenge next week."

The banker nodded, smiling with his thin lips only—his sad eyes never smiled now—and as he reached the bottom of the stairway with the doctor, paused for his coat and silk hat. He put these on with Nelson's help, then stood locking up the stairs at his approaching daughter; while behind the curtain Arthur shook and trembled with a wild, yearning passion of eagerness.

"Come Enid," the old father said gently and affectionately as he always spoke to the girl, loved better far than his own life. "We must be going. It's later than I thought, and the doctor has a patient waiting. You are Mrs. N. can finish up that discussion to-morrow or the next day. Come along."

"All right, father," she answered from the landing. "I just want to tell her I don't believe it even now. She and you—yes, and the doctor, too; he's worse than either of you—are bound and determined I shall. But I don't even yet, and never—"

"Come, come, Enid!" her father interposed. "You haven't begun that again, have you? Didn't you promise you'd drop it for a while? Say good night, now, and come along."

Arthur, risking discovery by pushing the curtain a little outward, was now just able to see the beloved figure on the landing—a sign that set his pulses leaping and that dimmed his sight with emotions unspeakable. Instinctively he raised his hand, swept off the battered old sou'wester and dropped it on the floor, leaving his gashed and close-cropped head quite bare. In her presence he could not stand and watch her, covered.

Mrs. Nelson, motherly and warm of heart to an extent that almost balanced the cold, impersonal character of her husband, took both Enid's hands in hers and drew the girl close and kissed her.

"Good night, dear," she said. "Thursday."

"Thursday," assented Enid, pulling on a long pearl-gray glove. "That is, unless I call you and tell you I can't go."

"Come, come Enid!" again the old man begged, raising a beckoning finger.

The girl turned and came down the stairs, a charming figure in her silver-fox coat and little fox toque, trimmed with a single rosebud. Arthur's hungry, famishing glance swept her from that bud to the tips of her patent-leather, gray-topped boots. He trembled so violently that he had to lean back against the door-jamb to support himself; and two big, heavy tears rolled down his wan cheeks, down over his unshaven, bristling chin—rolled down and dropped upon the floor at his feet.

Moignantly in that one moment he understood the wreck that Slayton and society had made of him; that the hard, unfeeling precision of the law had made of him; that "justice" had made of him. And, added to the presence that justice had not yet wrought its fill upon him, but that it still reserved more anguish even unto death, came now the full comprehension of what the law had ravished from his arms.

There she stood, that girl, at the bottom of the stairway with her father. And the convict looked upon her through his tears; beautiful and pure he saw her.

Her smile, he saw had saddened. New lines he had never seen in her face had written their story of her

grief and faith and struggle. Her eyes, as she looked up at the doctor, giving him her hand, had changed. Arthur had known her as a girl, she was a woman now. The tragedy and pain of these two years had made her one.

"Good night, doctor," said she. "Good night. And mind, now, no more brooding!"

He spoke jestingly, but a deeper tone of seriousness lay beneath his words.

"I never allow a patient of mine to brood, you know. I haven't pulled you through nervous-prostration and Heaven knows what else to have you drop back into the pit with worrying over what can't be helped."

"I'm not worrying, doctor," she answered, simply and quietly, her eyes on his. "Not a bit. I'm just going out and on as I have from the first—trusting."

The doctor dropped her gloved hand, raised both his arms a little at his sides and let them fall again in his familiar gesture of despair when anything passed his bounds of power or patience.

"Miss Chamberlain!" he protested. "Doctor!" she resisted with adamant firmness.

"Come, Enid!" her father once more interposed with as near an approach to irritation as his loyal and gentle old soul could ever simulate.

He took her by the arm, and together they passed down the hall. End walked on the side nearest the office-door. She passed not one foot from the opening to the portieres; hardly a foot from the eager, burning gaze of the hunted man. The little breeze of her passing wafted a faint breath of perfume to his nostrils—lys du Japon it was, delicate, elusive, supremely feminine. He recoiled into a chair, sank down and buried his face in his left hand, breathing hard.

He heard a few parting words, the opening of the outer door, its closing, then the hum of the motor as it drew away from the curb. End was gone.

The doctor's step sounded in the hallway. It entered the office, stopped, then came on again.

"Hm!" the doctor ejaculated. "What's the trouble?"

Arthur raised his head and stared at the physician. Nothing much about him had changed in those two fateful years. He had grown a little more bald, perhaps; but the same tooth-brush mustache still covered his lip, the same keen eyes still looked out through the same shell-rimmed glasses. The same impersonal air of calm and abstract science still distinguished him.

"Well?" asked the doctor. "What can I do for you, my man? These are not my regular hours, you know, but the maid told me it was urgent. Fracture, eh? And scalp-wound? Fighting, or what?"

Arthur faced the doctor, his heart beating thickly. Obviously Nelson did not recognize him. The doors of retreat had not yet closed behind him, then. He could have his injuries treated, pay the charge and go unmolested. Pursuit behind him, the same hideous charges still hanging over his head. Go—still a fugitive.

For a moment the struggle whether to stand his ground or flee racked his soul. But almost instantly Arthur's decision strengthened again and vanquished his weakness. He would not go until his story had been told. Now face to face with the supreme moment, he would stick to the task and live or die.

Arthur, pale as death and shivering all over, took three steps and confronted the physician, who stood there ready by the result.

garding him through those round glasses with as much personal interest as he might have had in an insect under a lens.

"What's the matter?" demanded Nelson. "Can't you talk? How did you get hurt?"

"I got hurt, answered Arthur, slow-

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ly and with twitching lips, "I got hurt trying to win justice."

Nelson laughed dryly. "One of the most prolific methods of acquiring injuries," he commented. "Well, who did it? And what with? Maybe that will have some bearing on my diagnosis."

"None whatever," Arthur replied, while the doctor peered at him in some surprise, astonished, to hear such words and tones in the mouth of this ruffian-looking water-rat. "None at all. But I don't mind telling you I was struck on the head with an iron bar, and that the same bar probably broke one of the bones in my arm here. Will you repair the damage?"

Nelson pursed his lips. "You ought to have gone to some hospital or other," said he. "Why take blacksmith's work to a watchmaker? Your case is commonplace and easy. I specialize in the finesse of the art—heart-surgery, ophthalmic work, delicate and complex operations. The stitching of your clipped scalp and the setting of your radius does not appeal to me, my good fellow, and—"

"You're a physician, aren't you?" demanded Arthur.

"So some claim. Others, the contrary."

"Well, if you are, then you're bound to take a case that comes to you, aren't you?"

"Morally, yes. But you must know that my prices are prohibitive for the ordinary run of men."

"What will you charge to do this work for me and look me over and give me an opinion of my case?"

"Since you ask, a hundred and fifty dollars," answered the doctor, congratulating himself that this figure would collapse the fellow, who would then take himself off to the nearest hospital—to some free clinic, possibly.

"A hundred and fifty, eh?" asked the fugitive, reaching for Slayton's wallet. "Good! Here it is!"

He put the wallet on the doctor's table, drew out the roll of bills, and clumsily, with his left hand, counted off the sum. This he shoved over to the doctor in silence, then replaced the rest of the money in the wallet and once more slid it into his pocket.

Equally silent, Nelson counted the sum, shot a suspicious glance at his strange patient—a glance directed especially at his clipped scalp and pallid hue—formulated a question, decided not to ask it, and finally, opening a drawer in the table, dropped the money into it. His expression was one of displeasure. Upstairs he had a couple of chapters on "The Minor Tactics of Chess" to read, and this interruption was most inopportune.

"Take your coat off," he directed. "Here, I'll help you. Now, then, sit down here. We'll get down to business."

While he laid out instruments, antiseptics, and materials, from time to time he cast a wondering look at this peculiar person whose every action was so unexpected. Somewhere, far back in the vague, dark caverns of his subconsciousness, that face seemed to waken ghostly memories. Some time, he thought, it must have passed upon the cinema screen of his experience, among the swarms of others that his busy life brought him in contact with. Some time, somewhere—but when, where? Shaking his head, he abandoned the elusive quest.

"Hm!" said he. "How long since it was hurt?"

"About twenty-four hours."

"Why didn't you have it seen to before?"

"The circumstances weren't such that I could."

"Weren't, eh?" sharply. "Something irregular?"

"Very."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Very much so. And beside," added Arthur, fixing his eyes on the doctor's face. "I wasn't where I could see you."

"You mean you were set on having my care?"

"I was determined to see you even before I got hurt."

"The deuce you say! What are you driving at, anyhow? Why did you want to consult me?"

"Doctor," answered the fugitive, slowly, "I once on a time had an important demonstration of your precise, scientific, highly efficient methods. I have never forgotten that lesson. Now on account of it I've come back to you."

"You mean to say I've treated you before?" asked Nelson, preparing an antiseptic wash.

"Empirically, yes!"

"H-m!" grunted the doctor, beginning his work on the broken bone with a deft skill beautiful to witness. He made no further comment, however; and Arthur, racked with pain, kept silence with stoic endurance.

Twenty-five minutes later his head and arm patched with supreme skill, Arthur sat gaunt and exhausted beside the table. Nelson poured him a stiff glass of whiskey.

"Here!" said he, setting it before him. "I prescribe about four ounces of spiritus frumenti. I don't want you keeling over on my hands, and for a fact you look mighty white."

Arthur pushed away the glass. "No, I thank you," he declined. "I don't care for any. I'll be all right in a minute or two. The pallor I've got now can't be taken away with any four ounces of spiritus frumenti."

"I thought as much," the doctor answered, giving him a caustic glance. "You don't mind telling me, do you, what clipped your hair and bleached your face?"

"You mean the principal factor?"

"The principal factor."

"Well," replied Arthur. "The principal factor of my imprisonment, when we come down to that, was very largely—you!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A moment's silence followed, while each man's eyes searched the other's face. Then the doctor, frowning, rubbed his close-shaven chin.

"What do you mean?" he asked, in his usual cold tones. "I a factor in your imprisonment? How so?"

"You don't understand?"

"No."

Arthur raised his left hand to his clipped and wounded head.

"Doctor," said he, "it was you who brought this infamy and this wound on me."

"I?"

"You see this prison pallor?"

"Well?"

"You put it on my face."

"How so?"

"You, doctor, did all this to me, and so much more that I couldn't tell you all of it in a week. Unless you know what Sing Sing really is you can't understand the depths you plunged me into."

"I plunged you into depths?" demanded Nelson, his face for the first time betraying a little uneasiness.

The presence of a ceramized man always is disconcerting, especially when that man has a fancied grievance and may be armed. Nelson now took this extraordinary patient for nothing else than an insane man with an obsession. Swiftly he calculated his chance of reaching the gun in his table drawer.

Arthur seemed to interpret the look and the thought behind it.

(To be continued.)

RICH, RED BLOOD RESISTS INFLUENZA

Its Victims Are Largely Among Weak, Anaemic People.

In the epidemic of la grippe, or influenza, that has swept over Canada, in common with the rest of the world, it has been noticeable that its earliest victims were the thin blooded anaemic people whose power of resistance is greatly weakened because of the watery condition of their blood. When a person is strong, hearty, able to enjoy a brisk cold day, chills and infections are set at defiance. But when the system is run down, when the nerves are shaky and the blood watery, the germs of influenza are quick to seize their opportunity. It is therefore good policy to keep the blood always rich, red and strong, and the nerves well nourished by the use of such a reliable tonic as Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. People who take these pills from time to time are usually able to resist colds, influenza and other ailments, and enjoy good health while many about them are weak, ailing and miserable.

To those who have been attacked by influenza, the after effects are more dangerous than the attack itself. They are left at the mercy of relapses and complications. There is a persistent weakness of the limbs, shortness of breath at the least exertion, poor digestion and a tendency to take cold easily. This condition will persist and will grow worse unless the blood is built up and the shattered nerves strengthened. For this purpose there is no tonic can equal Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. From first to last dose these pills make new, rich, red blood, which reaches every organ and every nerve in the body. Thus the lingering germs are driven out, the appetite is improved, and weak, despondent victims of influenza are transformed into cheerful, healthy, happy men and women. If you have passed through an attack of influenza you will find Dr. Williams' Pink Pills the one thing needed to restore you to full health and strength. If the trouble has passed you, you can further strengthen yourself against its insidious advance by the use of this same tonic medicine.

Medicine dealers everywhere sell Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, or you can procure them by mail at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by writing the Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.