The House of Whispers

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Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS

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swered with a grin. "But I don't believe all I read. They've made out a strong case against you, though."

"I didn't do it!" I cried passionately.

"If you didn't, who did?"

"It must have been Mr. Wick."

"There you go, jumping at conclusions. Why not Claire Bradford?"

"Why do you mention her? Do you suspect her?"

"If she didn't do it, why did she come down here to see you?"

"How did you know she was here?"

"I was watching you all the time you were talking to her."

"But how did you know who she was?"

"I saw the other one this morning. They look alike."

"But how did you know which sister it was?"

"You didn't seem to get along well enough in your talk for it to be Barbara," he answered with another grin.

It had not been my intention to reveal even to him Claire Bradford's second visit to my apartment, but I saw how foolish it would be of me to attempt to deceive or to withhold any information from such a shrewd observer.

Without reserve and with the utmost detail I proceeded to relate everything that had happened since I had seen him the afternoon before. I told of my discovery of the secret panel in my room and of the blind passageway into which it apparently led, of Barbara's having made the perilous journey over the window ledge to inspect my find, of the screams we had heard, followed by the shot, of how Barbara had fled back by the way she came, and I had run downstairs and with Wick had discovered the body. I told him every detail so far as I could remember it, winding up with my catching Claire Bradford leaving my apartment, just before my arrest and the finding of the revolver.

"You don't think the detectives themselves planted the gun on you?" he asked. "I've heard of them doing things like that."

He spoke with such an air of innocence that I had to smile. I doubt if there were many tricks of detectives that Gorman did not know all about.

"They had no opportunity whatever. Neither of them had been near the dresser before, and I was watching their every moment."

"Well, who did hide the revolver there, if they didn't?"

"I don't know."

"Couldn't Wick have done it?"

"I was with him every moment after we discovered the body."

"Maybe it was Claire Bradford?"

I shook my head.

"I thought at first it might have been she, but I'm convinced since talking with her that it was not. She's either entirely innocent or else the most wonderful actress in the world."

"I think we can leave her out of it," ventured Gorman.

"That leaves only Wick."

Gorman shook his head positively.

"No, Wick didn't do it. He's a bad one all right, and he has done time, but he's only a tool."

"Wick has done time!" I exclaimed. "How did you find that out? What have you learned about him?"

Gorman grinned at my eager questioning.

"I don't know much about him yet, but I'm sure he's an ex-con. While you were in court this morning," he explained, "I went up to the Granddeck to take a look at things for myself. Wick showed me through the Lutan apartment, thinking I was from the coroner's office. I spotted him at once. A crook that has done time is always sure to give himself away."

"How?" I asked.

"Well," said Gorman judicially, "men's businesses leave their marks on them. A clergyman don't have to be wearing a high vest for you to spot him, and nobody ever took a dancing teacher for a pugilist. A man that has looked at as many crooks as I have knows them by instinct, and then there's little ways you can tell. As I was going up to the apartment with Wick he just naturally fell into step with me, showing he had been used to marching with other prisoners. He talks, too, without moving his lips. That's a sure sign. They learn that in prison so they can talk without the guards knowing it."

"That's so," I cried. "It struck me that there was something funny about the way Wick talked, but I couldn't have told just what it was."

"Wick's a crook, all right, "but I think he comes from somewhere upstate or maybe out West, but he hasn't intelligence enough to be anything more than a runner for the gang."

"Well, what's your theory?" I asked. "If Wick didn't murder Miss Lutan, who did?"

"I don't know yet. Wick ain't big enough. Big jobs take big men to plan them. This whole thing is a big affair, carefully planned out. It takes more brains than Wick ever dreamed of having to plant anonymous notes and terrify people nearly out of their senses with mysterious whispers and then to steal the Bradford papers and the Gaston pearls and then when things get hot to have you already framed as the goat to blame it on."

"Then you think my discharge from the office was part of the plot?"

"Sure it was. You butted in on their blackmail plans, and they wanted to get square with you, and a young fellow out of work and discharged in disgrace is always an easy mark for suspicion."

"And was it part of the plot to blame Miss Lutan's murder on me?"

"I don't think so. The Lutan murder was an accident. Even the biggest crooks seldom deliberately plan murder. They're all afraid of the chair. She came in and surprised some one of the gang in the apartment. He had to shoot her to make his getaway. It was quick thinking on somebody's part after the murder to plant that gun in your rooms. That sort of scheming takes brains, and Wick hasn't got them."

"Who was it, then?"

"We've got to find," said Gorman, speaking slowly and with emphasis,



"We've Got to Find the Crook That Is Back of All This—the Master Mind."

"the big crook that is back of all this—the master-mind."

"The master-mind," I echoed.

"Yes," he said, "there's a big crook ed brain somewhere that has been directing the whole plot, and planning the actions of Wick and of the telephone girl, and maybe of Claire Bradford, too."

"I wonder if it could be her ex-husband. She told me, though, a few moments ago, that she had not heard of him for years, and she seemed to me to be telling the truth."

"I don't think it was him," said Gorman. "He was only a chauffeur. If he's in it at all, he's only one of the gang. He's not the master-mind."

"I hope we can keep the Bradfords out of it altogether," I said. "You see, Gorman—"

"I understand," he interrupted. "I know how the land lies. You need not worry about that. If Claire Bradford had any part in the plot, you can bet she was forced into it and driven to do what she did. Have you seen her sister?"

"No, and I hope she'll make no effort to see me. She mustn't. You'll see her, won't you?"

"Leave it to me," said the detective. "I'll manage to reach her without even her own family knowing anything about it. I'll make her understand that if she tries to see you or says anything, she'll only be damaging your case. Don't worry about her."

"There's one thing, though," I said, "that I wish you could do."

"What's that?"

"Can you find some way of getting to the Gaston apartment and exploring that secret passage and see where it leads?"

He turned savagely on me.

"Say, young fellow," he said, "if I didn't know that you were innocent, I'd swear that you were a dope fiend with this tale of a secret passage. You've been reading too many thrillers or going to the movies too much. They don't have secret passages in modern apartment houses. You better keep quiet about that. You can't get anybody to believe you, and you'll only hurt your case."

"But I know there's a passageway there—along the hall. I found the opening, a panel in my bedroom. There's a place there big enough for a man to walk in. I saw it."

He looked at me pityingly, and I could see that he did not believe a word I was saying.

"All right, there's a passage there, and we'll leave it there. A young fellow in love is apt to imagine all sorts of things."

I saw there was no use in my insisting further about the passageway. His mind was stubbornly made up that it could not exist. He was the only friend I had in all the great city, and I must leave it to him to work the thing out in his own way.

"What about a lawyer?" I asked.

"Didn't the court assign you one?"

"Yes, but he took it for granted that I was guilty, so I got rid of him."

"Well, there ain't much a lawyer could do yet. I'll dig up one when we need him. Bail is not possible in a murder case, so there is nothing for you to do but to sit tight and take it as easy as you can. By the way, have you heard anything from old Gaston since you were arrested?"

"Not a word," I answered. "I have not the least idea where he is or how to reach him."

"Humph, that's funny," said Gorman abstractedly. "Good-by, I'll see you again tomorrow."

He pounded on the cell door, and a guard released him, leaving me alone to ponder over my plight, and especially over his last question. What had he meant by it?

Where was old Rufus Gaston?

Once more suspicion of my aged relative shot through my brain. Was it possible that his was the master mind behind all this plotting? Gorman had insisted that the arch criminal behind Wick and the others must be some man of intellect. My great-uncle Rufus had brains. Out of a clear sky he had summoned me to live in the Granddeck and then had mysteriously disappeared. Certainly he had had opportunities for knowing Wick and the telephone girl. Barbara had recalled once having heard her father speak of him in disparaging terms. Had it been he who was plotting against the Bradfords and had brought me into the case as a scapegoat?

Was old Rufus Gaston the master mind? Where was he?

CHAPTER XI.

Fortunately for me, there had recently been a wave of public criticism of the courts for the long delays in bringing criminal cases to trial, and the district attorney was moving with all celerity to bring my case to a conclusion. An indictment against me for the murder of Daisy Lutan had been quickly found and the date had been already set for the trial—one week hence—so that the period of my incarceration and doubt as to my ultimate fate seemed likely to be very brief.

Utterly absurd as the situation was, accused of murdering a woman whom I never had seen and hardly had heard of until I saw her lying dead in her apartments, conscious as I was of my entire innocence in the matter, still, as in the solitude of my cell I reviewed the case, I found myself facing the ordeal of a trial for murder with considerable apprehension.

Circumstances certainly looked much against me. There was absolutely no way in which I could refute the testimony of the two detectives that they had found the revolver with one chamber discharged in the drawer of my dresser. I myself had seen them find it. While Gorman still held that there was a possibility that they themselves had put it there, I knew that neither of them had been near the dresser after I had admitted them to my rooms. The only person whom I had the slightest ground for suspecting was Claire Bradford, yet what motive could she have had?

Wick undoubtedly would testify that he had met me at the door of tht Lutan apartment directly after he had heard the shot. He might say that I appeared to be greatly excited. This would be the exact truth. There was even the possibility that he might swear that he had found me coming out of Miss Lutan's apartment. Even if he did not make the statement direct, shrewd questioning on the part of the district attorney could easily make it appear that I had just left the Lutan apartment. How could we possibly controvert his testimony?

Then, in addition, there were the damaging statements that would be offered by Nellie Kelly. She would swear that the evening before I had taken her out to dinner and had been questioning her about the other tenants in the house. Even though we knew that she was a tool of Wick and was the wife of Lefty Moore, the burglar, unless Gorman was able to discover that she herself had a criminal record, it seemed utterly hopeless to attempt to confute her statements.

It would also militate against me that at the time of the murder I was out of a job and almost without funds. They were likely, too, to bring out the fact that I had been discreditably discharged from the only position I had held in New York. The only man who knew anything about the matter, Mr. Wood, the head of the firm, had been suddenly called to France in connection with an order for munitions, and was not expected to return for several months. The fact would weigh against me, too, that I would be unable to offer the testimony of any character witnesses. Birge and Roller, my classmates with whom I had roomed ever since I had come to New York, were "somewhere in France" with the American troops and could not possibly aid me.

All of this was pointed out to me by John McGregor, a young attorney whom Gorman had employed for me. While Gorman and I had, I think, succeeded in convincing him of my innocence, the fact that he was continually citing the difficulties in the way of our proving it made me realize that he was very dubious as to the outcome.

The trouble was that we were absolutely without witnesses. Old Rufus Gaston's whereabouts still remained a mystery. If we could discover him in time, we could at least explain satisfactorily my presence in the Granddeck and could establish that I was not the homeless, penniless vagrant they would try to prove me. The longer old Rufus remained in hiding, the stronger became my suspicion that he might be in some way involved in the plot. His action in keeping his address a secret from me seemed to have been with deliberate intent.

After some discussion Gorman and I had agreed not to mention either of the Bradford girls.

"If one word about either of them slips out in court," said Gorman, "they'll be in for it. The papers will jump to it and print their pictures and all that. We'd better leave them out of it."

With this I heartily concurred. I was determined that Barbara Bradford must be in no way involved, come what may. I knew that she herself would be apt to be restrained from attempting to communicate with me by the fact that her sister's marriage was set for the day after tomorrow. Her loyalty to her family was such that she would not risk scandal by trying to aid me, at least not until her sister was married and the future for Claire and her mother assured.

Two small rays of sunshine lightened the gloom of my cell—the fact that the newspaper mention of the tragedy seemed thus far to have escaped my mother's notice and the fact that Barbara still believed in my innocence and trusted me absolutely. A day or two after my arrest Gorman had managed to see her and had told her that it was my wish that she keep entirely quiet her knowledge of the affair and that she should make no attempt whatever to communicate with me while I was in prison. He had brought back with him a hastily penciled note which often in my cell I read and re-read:



Each Time I Read Anew the Penciled Lines My Heart Rejoiced.

"Dear Mr. Nelson:

"I'm so sorry to hear of your trouble and the absurd charges against you. I'll do whatever you wish, of course. I trust you absolutely. If anything I can tell will aid you at any time, I am ready to speak—cost what it may. I know you are innocent and must soon be freed. Hoping to see you,

"With all confidence,

"B. B."

Each time I read anew the penciled lines, my heart rejoiced. Come what may, I felt sure that Barbara's heart was mine. I joyed to know that come out of prison to her though I might, she would be glad to see me. Joyfully would I have gone to the electric chair rather than have her fair name in the least smirched by scandal in trying to defend me. She alone could prove an alibi for me, but no one must ever know it.

What would a scandal-loving world say if the fact became public that she had been alone with me in my apartment near midnight? If only by the sacrifice of her good name could I go free, then let me stay in my cell. Let me even go to the electric chair. I would not have my life at the loss of my beloved's reputation.

One other thing I had kept from my lawyer—my discovery of the passageway between the walls in my great-uncle's apartment. If I could not get Gorman to believe in this secret passage, which I was convinced had some connection with the mysteries and the whisperings at the Granddeck, there was little likelihood that McGregor would believe my tale either. Given one single hour in my quarters at the Granddeck and I would have discovered whither it led and who used it, but once a man is charged with murder, his hands are tied. It was futile for me to mention it again, even to the detective or to my lawyer, until such time as I could show it to them and convince them that I knew what I was talking about.

While I was debating the situation in my cell, a keeper opened the door.

"You're wanted downstairs," he announced.

"What is it?" I asked, wonderingly.

"You've got a visitor."

"Who?" I questioned eagerly. Could it, I wondered, be Barbara? Had my sternly repressed longing to see her in some way communicated itself to her through the ether and impelled her to throw caution to the winds and come to the prison to see me?

"I don't know," the keeper answered. "It's a man. I don't know who he is."

A man. Who could it be? In all the monotonous time I had been behind the bars, only two men had come to see me, Gorman and McGregor. It could not be either of them, for both were well known to the prison attendants. As I hastened down the long corridor past the dismal row of barred doors, I was revolving in my mind the possibilities of my caller's identity.

Who could it be? Spurred on by my curiosity, I hastened into the counsel room. There sat my great-uncle Rufus.

He looked in much better physical condition than when I had last seen him, more vigorous and healthier. His skin was browned from exposure to the sun and wind, and his eyes were clearer and brighter. As I studied his face I could trace no vestige there of the terrible fear that had seemed to obsess him on the last occasion of our meeting.

For a moment we eyed each other without speaking. I was wondering—and well I think I might—whether the suspicions I had at times in regard to him had been wholly without foundation. Could it be possible that the crafty, miserly old chap was the master mind at the bottom of all the mystery and plotting? As my previous suspicions came up in my mind I determined to be wary in what I said to him. The fires of anger toward him began to kindle within me as I looked at him. I felt that it was his fault that I was locked up here.

Meanwhile he had been studying me. His keen old eyes had surveyed me from head to foot, returning to rest fixedly on my face, as though he was trying to read my thoughts. I wondered what was passing in his mind. Was he inwardly chortling at the plight in which he found me? Was he distressed to see a blood-relative behind the bars? Did he believe that I was guilty of the murder of Daisy Lutan? How had he learned of my arrest? What was his purpose in coming to see me? But his expression was unfathomable, so far as I was concerned.

He was the first to speak.

"So—you didn't do it, did you?"

"Of course not," I retorted indignantly. "Did you suspect that I was a murderer?"

He shook his head disparagingly, smiling an inscrutable smile.

"The evidence against you certainly looks convincing."

"I don't care," I exclaimed with heat. "I'm as innocent of the killing of Daisy Lutan as"—I hesitated—"as you are."

He nodded his head approvingly.

"There, there, boy, don't get excited. Of course I know you are innocent. You're of the Gaston blood, and there never was a Gaston that was a murderer or a lawbreaker. I never suspected you for a single second. I was off in the Maine woods twenty miles from a railroad. I didn't see a newspaper until day before yesterday evening. My eye just happened to catch a paragraph about the Granddeck. It was about your trial for the murder of Miss Lutan being set for next week. That was the first I had heard about it. I traveled all night to get to you."

My feelings toward him underwent a sudden revulsion. There was every evidence of sincerity in his manner. The knowledge that he believed in me was the most welcome news I had heard since my incarceration.

"We'll soon have you out of here," he went on, "now that I am here to help you. I got you into this, and I'll get you out of it if it takes every cent I possess. There's more than one fight left in old Rufus yet. Now start at the very beginning and tell me everything that has happened since I have been away."

What a relief it was to talk freely! With my mind once and for all cleared of all suspicion toward my old great-uncle, I began my story. Somehow the tie of blood is strong in time of trouble. I found it vastly easier to talk with my aged relative than it had been with either Gorman or my lawyer.

I began with my chance meeting with Barbara Bradford in the park as the blackmailers awaited her there. I told everything that had followed with the utmost detail, even to such small matters as my first meeting with Wick and the undue curiosity he had exhibited as to my acquaintance with the Bradfords. I recited the story of my unaccountable discharge in disgrace from my position and told of Gorman's unavailing efforts to learn the reason.

"The day I was discharged," I went on, "I had drawn out from the savings bank all my money with the purpose of sending it to my mother to whom I was in debt. I still had it with me when I arrived home at the apartment and I decided to put it in the wall safe, to which, you recall, you had given me the combination. Out of mere curiosity"—I made this confession with a blush of shame—"I had inspected the contents of the safe the day of my arrival and had examined the two caskets. The minute I opened the safe this second time I saw that it had been looted."

"What," exclaimed my great-uncle, starting from his seat, "not the pearls!"

I nodded.

"Everything. The casket with the pearls was gone. The other with the trinkets was undisturbed."

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "My wife's pearls stolen! Why, boy, I paid a hundred and fifty thousand dollars for that string. Tell me everything about it—everything, at once."

I could only repeat what I had told him already. When I had opened the safe on Sunday the pearls were there. When I had opened it again on the following Saturday the pearls were gone.

"Of course you told the police at once."

I explained to him why I had not done so, and my reason seemed to satisfy him.

"Go on with your story," he calmly directed. He seemed to have himself well in hand again. After the first shock at hearing of the loss of the pearls he showed no sign of emotion or displeasure.

He listened intently as I told him of my second meeting with Barbara Bradford when I had learned that the Bradford wall safe had been looted, too, and the papers abstracted concerning the annullment of Claire's first marriage. He nodded his head slightly when I told him of the anonymous notes found on the floor in both apartments.

"Did you hear the whispers, too?" he questioned.

"Yes," I answered. "I heard them several times. Barbara has heard them, and the laundress, too."

A look of unspeakable relief came over his face.

"I'm glad to know that others have heard them besides myself. When a man gets old his nerves sometimes play him strange pranks. The whispers seemed so unreal and incredible that I feared that I was suffering from the hallucinations of old age. Now that I know that the whispers are real, there is nothing to fear."

"And," I observed, "I believe, I am almost positive, I can explain the origin of the whispers."

"Tell me," he cried, his manner now entirely changed. He seemed elated at discovering that his brain was still dependable. It was as if a burden had suddenly been lifted from him.

Here was my opportunity. Gorman had utterly refused to credit my story of a secret passage and had ridiculed it. There had been no way that I could prove it, nor was it possible for Gorman to have investigated the walls of the Granddeck, even if he had placed any credence in my story. With my great-uncle it was different. As the occupant of the apartment he would have every right and opportunity to explore and verify my statements. I told him how, while speculating as to the origin of the whispers, I had observed the discrepancy in the measurements of the apartment and had verified my deduction that there was space enough for a passageway big enough for a man to traverse in the wall between the room I had occupied and the long hall. He listened intently as I described the plan of the rooms in detail and nodded his approval.

"And what is more," I added triumphantly, "Barbara Bradford and I had just discovered an opening into it by pushing the wall panel in my room back and then sliding it along. We were inspecting it when we heard the shot in the apartment below. I closed the panel and ran downstairs and have had no opportunity since to investigate, but I am sure the passage is there. I am convinced that it was the sound of voices there that made the whispers. I suspect it was used by whoever left the anonymous notes in the room, and that the person or persons who looted the safes entered and escaped by that means. I would not be surprised if it was not by means of this passageway that the murderer of Miss Lutan escaped, after he had left his revolver in the drawer of my dresser."

My great-uncle shook his head perplexedly.

"It sounds improbable—too much like a romance. They do not build modern apartment buildings with secret passageways. Space is far too valuable, and besides, all plans have to be filed with the city's bureau of buildings."

"But it's there," I cried desperately. "I saw it. Barbara Bradford saw it."

"Well," he comforted me, "we will soon find out about it. I have many matters to attend to today, but tomorrow I shall go up to the apartment, and if there is such a passageway I shall find it and see where it leads."

"Then you are not staying in the apartment?"

"No, I shall remain at a hotel until my wife returns."

At this juncture a prison attendant approached and informed him that the time of his visit was up. Imperiously my great-uncle waved the man away. Somehow the possession of great wealth carries with it a manner of expecting obedience from every one that generally is successful. The man withdrew, muttering to himself and left us undisturbed.

"Now tell me about the murder," Mr. Gaston directed.

Concisely I stated the facts as I knew them. It was a shock to him to hear that at least two of the trusted attendants at the Granddeck, Wick and the telephone girl, were of the criminal class.

"Tut, tut, tut," he exclaimed. "Just think of it! That's the worst of living in a big city. You never know what sort of people there are about you. I'll call up Mr. Kent, the owner of the building, this afternoon and have him get rid of them at once."

"Please don't," I cried. "Gorman and I are both convinced that Wick and the girl know something about the murder. Don't do anything to let them know that they are under suspicion. So long as they are employed at the Granddeck we know where to lay hands on them when we want them."

"That's so," he admitted. "I'll say nothing for the present. As I won't be living there until after this is cleared up, it can make no difference. But, look here, young man, why doesn't this Bradford girl come forward and clear you of this charge? She was with you at the time. She knows you didn't do it."

"Because I will not permit her to do so," I replied with heat. "I love Barbara Bradford!"

"That's it, is it?" he commented, giving me a quizzical glance from under his bushy white eyebrows.

"I wouldn't for all the world," I continued, "have her mixed up in this. Her sister is to be married tomorrow, and the scandal might stop the wedding; and besides I'm not going to have it known that she was there alone with me that night in my rooms. I love her too well for that. Some day I am going to ask her to be my wife."

He raised his eyebrows.

"And on what do you expect to marry?" he inquired.

"Of course I have said nothing as yet," I hastened to explain; "I've nothing to offer her."

"No," he agreed, "you've nothing to offer her"—and then with a meaning glance he added a little word that in spite of my predicament made my heart sing with joy and stirred my expectations mightily—"you've nothing to offer her—yet.

"But cheer up," he advised as a parting word of counsel. "I'll get in touch with Gorman and your lawyer as soon as I leave here today, and tomorrow we will find out about that secret passage you think you have discovered."

Compunction that I ever had doubted the integrity of his purpose toward me smote as he departed. I tried to think of something to say to express my gratitude to him, to let him know how much I appreciated his coming at once to my aid, but the only thing I could think of slipped from my lips:

"I am sorry about the pearls."

"So am I," he answered grimly, and went his way.

One thing now I certainly was sure of—his was not the master-mind that had planned all the criminal deeds, but the mystery of the Granddeck was still as much of a mystery as ever.

CHAPTER XII.

It was the second day after this—the day set for Claire Bradford's wedding—that in the morning, much earlier than customary, Gorman came to the prison to see me.

I met him jubilantly. My uncle's unexpected return to the city and his generous and convincing offers of aid had filled me with new hopes. I trusted, too, that old Rufus' keen eyes quickly would discover the secret passageway now that I had indicated to him where to look for it. I was confidently expecting that the resulting developments quickly would free me from even the suspicion of being a murderer. The minute, however, that I laid eyes on Gorman I knew that something had gone wrong.

"What is it?" I cried. "What's the matter now?"

"You're a wonderful liar, you are," was his surly greeting, "with your pipe dreams about secret passageways and stolen pearls."

"What do you mean?" I replied. I had not the least idea what he was getting at.

"You almost had me believing you," he said savagely. "If it wasn't that I knew that Wick and that girl up there were crooks I would wash my hands of the whole affair."

"I don't understand," I answered indignantly. "Every statement I have

GRAVE OF FOUR DYNASTIES

Ambitions of Austria, Russia, Germany and Turkey All Lie Buried in the Balkans.

We stood on the forward deck of the Sirio as she slipped southward, through the placid waters of the Adriatic, at 20 knots an hour. Less than a league away the Balkan mountains, savage, mysterious, forbidding, rose in a rocky rampart against the eastern sky.

"Did it ever occur to you," remarked the Italian officer who stood beside me, a noted historian in his own land, "that four great empires have died as a result of their lust for dominion over the restless lands which lie beyond those mountains? Austria coveted Serbia—and the empire of the Hapsburg is in fragments now. Russia, seeing her influence in the peninsula imperiled, hastened to the support of her fellow Slavs—but Russia has gone down in red ruin, and the Romanoffs are dead. Germany, seeking a gateway to the warm water, and a highway to the East, seized on the excuse thus offered to launch her waiting armies—and the empire reared by the Hohenzollerns is bankrupt and broken. Turkey fought to retain her hold on such European territory as still remained under the crescent banner. Today a postmortem is about to be held on the Turkish empire and the house of Osman.

"Think of it! Four great empires, four ancient dynasties, lie buried over there in the Balkans. It is something more than a range of mountains at which we are looking; it is the wail of a cemetery."—E. Alexander Powell in Scribner's Magazine.

CHECK ON TRICKY "COPPERS"

Simple Contrivance Prevents Fraud on the Part of Applicants for Coveted Positions.

In Philadelphia the position of traffic policeman is open only to men who are six feet or more in height. Such positions are so much sought after that many applicants who fall short of the required height by only a small fraction of an inch are tempted to cheat a little bit by rising on their heels.

An ingenious application of electricity is now used to circumvent this trick, and any attempt to register a fraudulent measure is disclosed at once. The applicant, as he stands upon the platform under the slide rule, sets his feet upon two metal plates that are normally a trifle above the platform. They are just large enough to be covered by a man's heels, and when the candidate stands with his his heels on the floor the plates are so depressed that they make a contact and form a circuit that lights a lamp overhead. As long as the man stands with both heels on the ground the lamp stays lighted, but the moment he raises either heel the smallest part of an inch the contact is broken and the lamp goes out. So does he.

NOW, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

New Yorker Saw Only One Way to Settle Problem of Street-Car Etiquette Confronting Him.

A business man who was raised far enough away from New York still to say "ma'am" when he speaks to a strange woman was recently confronted with a new angle of one of the major transportation problems of city life.

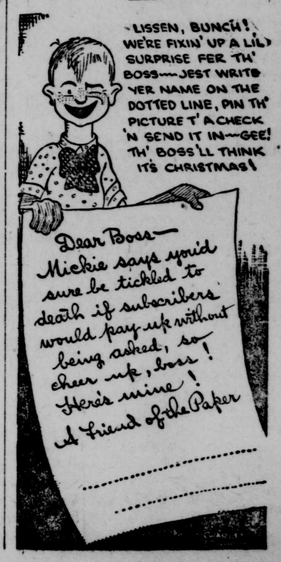
His theory is that since women have sought and found equal opportunity in business and in politics, a tired man should have an equal opportunity in the seat lottery on the way home at night. It isn't a fixed rule, but he has the exceptions to it pretty well in mind. He will not take a seat if there is a woman standing near it. He will yield his seat to an elderly woman and—this is a cardinal exception—to a woman with a baby.

But he did not have the answer ready the other night when he looked up from his paper to find clinging to the strap before him a handsome young woman with a poodle under her arm.

The hero of this experience is a quick thinker, but also set in his convictions. Of course, he reasoned, a dog isn't a baby; a woman who will carry one on the subway in the rush hour isn't a "tired working girl;" if I gave up my seat to a woman with a baby I should be doing only what is right, but if I give my seat to this woman with the pup every man in the car will laugh and I shall feel silly myself.

Being a diplomat he got off at the next station and waited for another train.—New York Sun.

MICKIE SAYS



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