THREE SHUTTERED HOUSES

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

Copyright—WNU SERVICE

CHAPTER I

—1—

Objects at rest have inertia; they are hard to move. But objects in motion may by the least force be diverted, and their whole future course thus changed. It is so with lives; for life is motion, and this is particularly true in youth. A young man's most casual encounter may modify his whole life thereafter, in splendid or in dreadful ways.

It was Mabel Gaye who performed this function for Clint Jervies. Mabel was of no least importance in Clint's eyes. He had never met her till Enid Mason's dance at the Somerset, and he saw with some distaste upon their first encounter that Mabel had had a little too much to drink. But the youngster who was her escort for the evening was in worse case than she, and in no condition to drive a car; so a little before midnight Clint, who had on this occasion no feminine responsibilities of his own, volunteered to take Mabel safely home, and had Enid's thanks for that consideration.

When he and Mabel emerged from the hotel, it was raining, gusty squalls with an occasional roll of thunder; and Mabel lived a dozen or fifteen miles out of Boston along the Providence road, so that the drive was a long one. As soon as they were in the car, she went to sleep and stayed asleep till Clint roused her to direct him through the last stages of the journey. When they reached her door, she urged him to come in, and when he declined this invitation, she insisted on being kissed good night.

Clint thus far obliged her; but he said at once afterward: "I'll have to run along now. There's some construction on the road. I had to detour, coming out. It will take me an hour to get back to town."

"Oh, you don't have to hurry," she pleaded. "You can dodge all that by going over Kenesaw Hill."

And to his questions, she gave him directions how to find this byway. At a certain traffic-light he must turn to the right . . . He nodded his understanding, but good-humoredly insisted on departing. She stood in the open doorway still pleading, while he got into the car at the foot of the steps; but when she saw that he was bound to go, she called softly:

"Well, good night! And thanks a lot! You were a peach to bring me home. Telephone me tomorrow."

"Sure will," Clint promised. "I'll be seeing you."

He was perfectly sincere in this promise; but as a matter of fact it was more than two years before he saw her again, and he had by that time completely forgotten their former encounter. Yet if he had not taken Mabel home, and returned to town by way of Kenesaw Hill, there is no reason to think he would ever have seen June Leaford, and Kitty Leaford's death must have gone unremarked, and those three shuttered houses on the Hill might well have hid their dark secret to the end . . .

Clint left Mabel Gaye standing in her own door and drove away. He chuckled and rubbed his lips with the back of his hand where she had kissed him; and he thought soberly that someone ought to tell her a few things, and was amused at his own puritanic mind. He had not always been so austere, and he forgot Mabel now to think about himself, as a young man is apt to do.

Before Clint's father died, the older man must have suspected that Clint and his sister Clara were not ready for self-management; for he created the Jervies Trust; and Miss Moss, an angular middle-aged woman with a surprising tenderness beneath her iron exterior, who had been Mr. Jervies' secretary, became the actual if not the titular head of that Trust. She had been almost like a foster-mother to these children since their own mother died, and continued in that role. Clint, reflecting tonight in a mild amusement on his own virtuous disapproval of Mabel Gaye, thought Miss Moss would likewise be amused at his attitude. She had used to be so deeply distressed by Clint's own recklessness, and Clara's too.

But that was better than a year ago, and times were changed. Clint himself now administered the Jervies Trust, and shrewdly too; he was become a sober-minded young man of affairs. He thought tonight that sobriety and virtue might sometimes mean a certain loneliness. When she could trust Clint to stand on his own feet, Miss Moss had married Inspector Tope; and Clara, long before that, was married to young Mat Hews, whose new play would open in Chicago in a day or two.

Considering these things tonight, Clint decided it must be fun to be married, if you found the right girl. Then he came to the traffic light Mabel Gaye had described to him, and turned off the main highway, up Kenesaw Hill.

It was near one o'clock in the morning; and the shower was on in full force—a drenching rain, flares of lightning. He passed for a while no residences at all; but as he crossed the flat top of Kenesaw Hill he saw, dimly through the rain, some houses set absurdly close together, to one side of the road. Clint thought it was as though they huddled near one another in this solitude for the sake of company. The front door of the middle one of these houses was open, with a light burning in the hall, and he decided that the door had blown open, that someone would presently come down and shut it. Then the houses fell behind him as he drove on.

In the illumination of an especially bright flash of lightning, he had an impression of something white, moving, beside the road ahead of

"No, no," she stammered. She was breathless, panting.

him, and just beyond the range of his headlights. You often saw creatures along the road at night, saw them usually as two red spots that were eyes, saw them later as dark shadows where a cat or a dog squatted to watch you pass.

But this thing was not two red spots; it was a white bulk. His headlights caught it now. Moving—yes, running.

He leaned forward more intently. This was a person, running ahead of him along the road. It was a woman, running ahead of him through the rain. There was a curious shapelessness about her; and he recognized the reason for this: her dark hair was streaming over her shoulders, so that she seemed to have no head. Her feet, he thought, were bare. A woman in a nightgown.

He was within fifty yards of her now, overtaking her. The nightgown, he saw, was not of silk or satin or any soft material; it appeared to be a sober garment, entirely lacking in frivolity; yet it was indubitably a nightgown, and by the same token there could be no doubt that it was the only garment this woman wore.

Clint was driving slowly, and the woman ran swiftly, so that she kept for an instant this distance ahead of him. Then, like a wild animal which perceives the hopelessness of straightaway flight, she suddenly turned aside off the road, and she tripped and fell headlong, and swung around in one swift motion and came to her feet again. Like a creature at bay she faced him, her back set against the trunk of a great tree.

He would remember the picture she made. He saw her face, a white oval framed in the dark shadows of her hair. One strand of hair was plastered across her brow and cheek by the rain, like a black band across her countenance. She brushed this desperately aside.

That nightgown, for all its severe simplicity, was pressed close to her body by the wind; it was glued to her by the rain. Clint saw that this was, incredibly, a girl, not a woman at all. A rather tall girl, slender without being thin. She had run gracefully, he remembered that.

His heart was pounding, shaking him. He pulled up the car and opened the door on the side toward her.

"What's the matter?" he asked. He spoke carefully, in a gentle tone, so that he might not frighten her further. "What's the matter? Anything I can do?"

"No, no," she stammered. She was breathless, panting.

"I can give you a lift," he urged. "This is no night—"

She appeared to change her mind. She came toward him, and he swung the door wide. "Yes, take me on," she bade him. "Straight on." And she climbed into the car and sat down beside him in the wide seat here.

She was, of course, drenched. "Put on my coat," he urged, and started to strip it off.

"No, no," she repeated. "It's not far." And she urged: "Go on. Quickly, please!"

He set the car in motion; and he looked at her sidewise in an incredulous and delighted wonder. Her hair, heavy with water, lay across her shoulders in dark ribbons; her single garment was so much a part of her that she seemed like wet marble. He thought of sculptured nymphs under a fountain's arching screen. In one swift glance he saw her entire, and unforgetably.

She did not return his glance; but neither did she seek to cover herself from his eyes. Her own were fixed straight ahead; yet by something in her very posture, in the rigidity which she maintained, he knew she was conscious of his scrutiny, fighting to ignore it, choked and stifled by her own sudden realization of how she must appear to him.

Clint, in a swift sympathy and tenderness, switched off the dashlight, so that she sat in a cloaking darkness. He kept his eyes thereafter upon the road and did not look at her again. So presently he felt her relax a little, beside him; and he was conscious that she studied him for a long moment, with a deep attention.

Suddenly she said: "Thank you!"

"No trouble," Clint assured her. "I'll take you anywhere—"

"I didn't mean that," she said honestly. "But—it's not far."

He felt, rather than saw, that she was breathing with long careful inhalations, as though she had to be on guard lest she shudder or sob. He asked slowly:

"Something—frighten you? Can't I help?"

"No, no, no," she told him, her voice trembling. "I'm not afraid. I'm not." She whispered with a sudden passion: "I'm not! I won't be afraid!"

Yet he saw that she was desperate with terror.

"Listen," he urged. "I don't want to butt in. But—don't you need someone to stand by?"

"I'm all right," she insisted.

He nodded; but he said gently: "I'm Clint Jervies. I'm—respectable. If you ever want help, I'd like to—"

She said: "Let me out, please."

Clint protested: "I don't mean to bother you. You needn't run away from me."

"This is where I want to go," she insisted. "Quick. Stop."

Clint obeyed her. The car had scarce ceased moving before she slipped to the ground. She closed the door behind her. She called: "Thank you." Then she was gone, vanishing into the wood beside the road.

He hesitated, all reluctance. The rain still pelted; lightning flickered remotely, or crashed close at hand. He saw something like a path where she had disappeared.

But she was gone, and Clint ruefully drove on. He passed a crossroad; and presently the way he followed joined the main thoroughfare into Boston.

Before he came home he had decided what to do. Inspector Tope had proved long ago his capacity for finding an answer to the most obscure conundrums; the old man might be able to read the answer to this riddle of a lovely girl, scantily clad, running so desperately along a lonely country road in the night and in the rain.

It was too late to seek out the Inspector and Miss Moss tonight; but tomorrow, Clint decided, he would go to them with this fantastic tale.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Name Robert of Teutonic Origin; Means 'Of Shining Fame'; Is Favored by Many

Robert, for centuries a favorite name, is of Teutonic origin and means "of shining fame." Originating in Germany, it is used in eight languages and has about 20 forms. Its noted bearers are numerous, writes Florence A. Cowles in the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Robert Bruce (1274-1329), Scotland's national hero, shall head the list. Third of his noble house to bear the name, he is called Liberator of Scotland, of which country he was king for the last 23 years of his life. Other kings of Scotland have also borne this name.

Robert Burnes (d. 1796), Scotch poet, and Robert Browning (d. 1889), English poet, are two who deserve special mention.

Other great Roberts of the past are, briefly: Dudley, earl of Leicester (d. 1588), whom many believe to have been secretly the husband of Queen Elizabeth; Blake (d. 1657), English admiral; Herrick (d. 1674), English poet who wrote "I had not loved thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more"; Boyle (d. 1691), English physicist, discoverer of Boyle's law, relating to pressure of gases; Harley, earl of Oxford and Mortimer (d. 1724), British statesman.

Lord Clive (d. 1774), founder of the British Empire in India; Adam (d. 1792), architect, designer of furniture; Emmet (d. 1803), Irish patriot; Morris (d. 1806), signer of the Declaration of Independence, founder of the Bank of Philadelphia, oldest financial institution in the United States; Paine (d. 1814), lawyer, signer of the Declaration of Independence; Fulton (d. 1815), first to apply steam to navigation with practical success.

Blair (d. 1828), Scottish astronomer, remembered also for suggesting the use of lime juice in the British navy as a preventive of scurvy; Hoe (d. 1833), inventor of the Hoe press; Hoe, grandson of the foregoing (d. 1909), inventor of the rotary and multicolor presses; Southey (d. 1843), poet laureate of England whose works fill more than 100 volumes; Lee (d. 1870), commander-in-chief of the Confederate army.

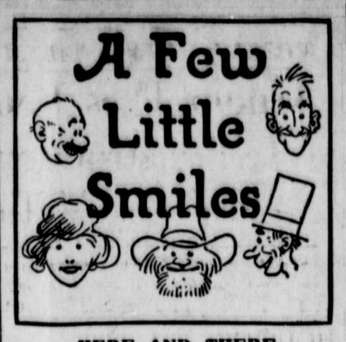
Stevenson (d. 1894), author of "Treasure Island," etc.; Ingersoll (d. 1899), orator and agnostic; Koch (d. 1910), German bacteriologist who discovered the tuberculosis bacillus; Peary (d. 1920), discoverer of the North Pole; LaFollette (d. 1925), governor of Wisconsin and presidential candidate; Hilliard (d. 1927), actor and playwright;

'THREE SHUTTERED HOUSES'

•

Ben Ames Williams' story of death and intrigue in the lives of three families will thrill you. Inspector Tope and Miss Moss, your old detective friends of fiction, finally solve the mystery, but only after enlisting the aid of June Leaford and Clint Jervies, two young people involved in the unfolding of the drama.

• *Begins Today*



HERE AND THERE

An Irishman entered a ticket office one day and inquired the fare to Chicago.

"Ten dollars," returned the clerk, "but we are making a special rate today. We'll sell you a round-trip ticket for fifteen dollars."

"A round-trip? What do you mean?" puzzled the Irishman.

"Yes," explained the clerk, "you can go to Chicago and back."

"Well," said Pat, "what do I want to come back for, when I'm already here?"

False Alarm

The host showed his guest into his bedroom.

"I hope you're not nervous, old chap," he said, "but this room is supposed to be haunted."

"Haunted!" exclaimed the guest. "What by?"

"A wraith—a spectre!"

"A w-what?"

"A wraith—a spectre."

The guest sighed with relief, and the color returned to his cheeks.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said at last. "At first I thought you said a rate collector!"

THIS WAY IN

"Young lady, I shall never darken your doors again."

"How y' gonna git in—through the windows?"

More Profitable

An amiable old man, a visitor, was trying to win the friendship of the small daughter of the house.

"I'll give you a nickel for a kiss," he said.

"No, thank you," she replied sweetly. "I can make more money taking castor oil."

Something Picturesque

"You can win in a walk," said the admiring friend enthusiastically.

"Public sentiment would never be satisfied with anything so sedate and orderly," answered Senator Sorghum. "Can't you arrange for me to win in an airplane or a parachute jump?"

Something From Above

"Isn't there danger," said the timid man, "of dropping things from an airplane on the people below?"

"That isn't the worst," answered the candid inventor, "you're lucky if the whole thing doesn't fall on you."

Hey, That Girl's In Again!

He—Why did you send that poor fellow back for your cold cream? He'll never find it.

She—I only wanted to get the chap off my hands.

People Are Too Suspicious

Judge—How could you swindle people who trusted in you?

Prisoner—But, judge, people who don't trust you can't be swindled.

That's Different

Office Boy—Sorry, but you can't see Mr. Blodgett.

Caller—Is he in conference?

Office Boy—No, he's busy.

WRECKLESS DRIVING?

"He was arrested for reckless driving."

"When he'd smashed his car to splinters like that?"

Hard to Please

"In running for office," said Hi Ho, the sage of Chinatown, "you cannot please every one; the best that you can do is to look benignly pleasant and convey the impression that everybody pleases you."

On a Dude Ranch

Cowboy—What kind of saddle do you want—one with or without a horn?

Dude—Without a horn, I guess. There doesn't seem to be much traffic out on these prairies.

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT

BOWS AND ARROWS OF QUALITY. Send for price list. MAJOR ARTHUR BLACKBURN - Towson, Md.

OLD RECORDS

CASH for your old Phonograph Records. We pay up to $10.00 for a single record. Send 25c for catalogue listing records wanted. SUNRISE AMUSEMENT CO., ARGYLE COURT, BURLINGTON, IOWA.

PHOTOGRAPHY

25¢ FILMS DEVELOPED AND PRINTED 25¢ Coin
Any 6 or 8 Exposure Roll. Velox Deckle-edge Prints. DeLuxe Enlargement Coupon FREE! Special Prices on Candid Film.
The PHOTO FINISHING SHOP
58 Genesee Valley Trust Bldg. ROCHESTER, N.Y.
"Where Your Films Are Made"

KODAK ROLLS DEVELOPED
Including 8 deckle edged no-fade prints and one double weight enlargement for 25c in coin. Fast service. Address orders with coin to LATSHAW PHOTO SERVICE, CENTERVILLE - MARYLAND.

REMEDY

OILY HAIR?
Sprinkle a little of Dr. Kamm's Dry Shampoo Powder on the hair and brush out. That's all! It's harmless—It's effective! Removing excess oil it restores lustrous beauty. SAMPLE FREE with directions. Mail 10c to cover postage and handling.
SPECIAL OFFER:
100 Shampoos for Only $1.00
Mail today—Money back guarantee—we pay postage
KAMM COSMETIC CO., 327 N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md.

THANKS FOR A HAPPY STOMACH!
FOR STOMACH ULCERS due to hyperacidity. Such discomforts as heartburn, belching, bloating, indigestion and stomach pains due to hyperacidity can be effectively relieved at home by the use of the diet we recommend and ARLON. Write for facts today. It will pay you. Or enclose $1.00 for trial package of ARLON TABLETS
ARLINGTON DRUG DIST., Box 230A, Arlington, Va.

BEAUTY SCHOOL

Your Beauty Course Depends on Right Training. *Your success assured under personal supervision of* WINONA FITZGERALD KING
Graduates always in demand. *Write us today.*
MAISON FREDERIC BEAUTY SCHOOL
200 W. Saratoga St. - Baltimore, Md.

HOTELS

Come to Baltimore, Maryland
Stop at
THE MOUNT ROYAL HOTEL
Mt. Royal Ave. and Calvert Sts.
9 stories — Fire-proof
Rates begin at $1.50 per day
Coffee Shop—*Music and Dancing in the* FAMOUS ALGERIAN ROOM

INSECTICIDES

BE RID OF ROACHES!
Harris Famous Roach Tablets break up nesting places. Clean, odorless, safe to use anywhere. Thousands of satisfied customers. Send $1.00 for generous package mailed in plain wrapper. Money back if not entirely pleased. *Address*
P. F. HARRIS MFG., 407 W. Lombard, Baltimore, Md.
AGENTS WANTED—A few sales territories still open. Write for Particulars

Ask Me Another

● *A General Quiz*

1. What is the greatest solvent?
2. Why is an acorn so often seen in carving on Colonial houses?
3. What is meant by "the great American novel"?
4. Who described architecture as frozen music?
5. What does corn mean?
6. Why do birds throw their heads back when drinking?

The Answers

1. Water. It dissolves to a greater or lesser extent almost all substances which it contacts.
2. It was considered a symbol of hospitality.
3. It is a phrase applied to a novel not yet written but dreamed of by all who are interested in American literature.
4. Goethe described architecture as frozen music.
5. To the American, maize; the Chinese, rice; the Scotsman, oats; the North German, rye; the South German, wheat.
6. In order to swallow. The pigeon is the only bird that drinks by suction.

Sentinels of Health

Don't Neglect Them!

Nature designed the kidneys to do a marvelous job. Their task is to keep the flowing blood stream free of an excess of toxic impurities. The act of living—*life itself*—is constantly producing waste matter the kidneys must remove from the blood if good health is to endure.

When the kidneys fail to function as Nature intended, there is retention of waste that may cause body-wide distress. One may suffer nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—feel tired, nervous, all worn out.

Frequent, scanty or burning passages may be further evidence of kidney or bladder disturbance.

The recognized and proper treatment is a diuretic medicine to help the kidneys get rid of excess poisonous body waste. Use *Doan's Pills*. They have had more than forty years of public approval. Are endorsed the country over. Insist on *Doan's*. Sold at all drug stores.

DOAN'S PILLS

WNU—4 29—39

Only GOOD MERCHANDISE Can Be CONSISTENTLY Advertised

● BUY ADVERTISED GOODS ●