THREE SHUTTERED HOUSES

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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THE STORY SO FAR

Driving home through a torrential rain, young, well-to-do Clint Jervies picks up a girl, scantily clad, running in terror-stricken flight down the road. She rides a short ways, leaves the car and runs into the woods. He decides to talk to his dear friends, Inspector Tope and Miss Moss, about his adventure. Clint still thinks of her as Miss Moss, his former guardian, though she and the Inspector are married. Clint, having settled down, now manages the Jervies estate himself. In three shuttered houses, all gloomy and forbidding, on Kenesaw Hill, near where Clint picked up the frightened girl, lived three families. In one house lived old Denman Hurder, his wife, who had been Ella Kenesaw, and his daughter, Kitty Leaford, and her daughter June. Living in a second house was Aunt Evie Taine, Uncle Justus and brothers Rab and Asa. The third held old Matthew Bowdon and his wife. Living on the estate was a man known only to June as "Uncle Jim." Following their usual custom the three families gathered in the Hurder home Saturday night. Kitty, June's mother, retired early with a headache. She was given warm milk, and insisted on taking two sleeping tablets, one more than usual. Strangely upset, June slept fitfully, and in the middle of the night went in to see her mother. She finds her dead. Panic stricken, June ran from the room, out the unlocked door, and into the storm to get Doctor Cabler. It was here that Clint Jervies picked her up. Clint tells his story to the Inspector and Mrs. Tope. They communicate with the police, who are told by the family doctor that Kitty Leaford died of an overdose of sleeping powders. Clint and the Inspector are not satisfied and feel further investigation is necessary. When Clint and Tope drive back to Kenesaw Hill they find Inspector Heale and the medical examiner, who also reports the death due to an overdose of the powders. He becomes angry when Tope intimates that queer circumstances surround the death. After returning home June ran to see Uncle Jim and told him of her mother's death. There Clint and the Inspector visit them.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

—6—

Glovere explained then, watching these newcomers: "I don't know anything about—last night. Miss Leaford had just told me that her mother was dead." His eyes flickered from one of them to the other; and when no one spoke, he said in a sort of swift passion: "Some one tell me what has happened. Why did you come here?"

"They said Miss Leaford might be here," Clint answered. "I was driving past, last night, overtook her on the road. She was running, through all that rain. I gave her a lift as far as Doctor Cabler's house."

June was afraid he would say more than this; she hurried to explain:

"You see, Uncle Jim, Mother hated thunder and lightning. So when the storm came near, I went in to see if she was all right. And when I saw her, I knew she was—dead. But I lost my head, I guess. Calling the Doctor was the only thing I could think of."

"What happened?" Uncle Jim insisted.

"She took too many sleeping-tablets," June told him, in a low tone. "You know, she was sick from doing that, once before." Her face suddenly was stony calm. "I gave them to her," she whispered. "I gave them to her, and she died."

Clint caught her hand. "Now listen," he protested. "You—"

Her head leaned back against the cabin wall. "She insisted on taking two," the girl said. "I couldn't persuade her not to. I was afraid." She whispered: "Oh, I wish I'd spilled them all!" And then she explained:

"You see, she couldn't get to sleep, so she got up and went to the bathroom and took the rest of them."

Tope asked thoughtfully: "You spilled some of them, you say?"

"While I was getting one for her," June answered. "I set the bottle down on the basin, and it fell and tipped over. They spilled out, and there was water in the basin, a little. The tablets in the water dissolved. There weren't but three left in the bottle. And I took one of them to her, one besides the one I already had. Then she must have heard the thunder coming, and she was afraid of lightning. So she got up and took the other two. Oh, I wish I'd spilled them all."

"How do you know all this?" Uncle Jim asked. There was a rasp in his tones; something challenging and angry. "How does anyone know what she did?"

"Why, the other tablets were gone," said June.

"Bottle empty?" Uncle Jim insisted.

The girl hesitated. "I don't know," she said. "We didn't find the bottle. It's probably under the bed, or in the bed or something. We didn't look there. She was there." Her tone wavered.

Clint held her hand hard.

He said: "Now you forget it, Miss Leaford! Don't worry. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"I wasn't afraid—of you," she confessed, and saw the leap of pleasure in his eyes, and was happy that she had pleased him. But suddenly she was uneasy; she had stayed too long. "I must go back," she said.

Clint rose. "I'll go with you."

"Will you?" she asked gratefully.

They went past the others. "Miss Leaford is going home," Clint explained. "I'll come back here."

They came within sight of the houses; and Clint paused.

"I won't go in," he said. "Remember, though, I'm coming again. Soon."

He caught her hand and held it. Incredibly, he kissed her hand, the backs of her fingers. She saw his eyes shine.

"Good-by," he said.

She loosed her hand and went on alone, and she held one hand over the other, to protect and treasure the spot his lips had touched.

She went on toward the house. When she had gone in, Asa came after her, quietly, out of the wood.

CHAPTER VII

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It was to be Miss Moss who perceived beyond dispute that Kitty Leaford had been murdered. She had stayed behind, in the car, when the garage man Thayer, in response to Tope's inquiry went to point out the path that led to Jim Glovere's cabin. Thayer returned, and a girl came out of the office of the garage to join him. Thayer called her Lissa; she was, Miss Moss perceived, his daughter; and Miss Moss had some casual talk with them.

After a time she saw Lissa's eyes suddenly fix on something toward the house, in an expression of concern; and Miss Moss looked that way to see a man moving secretly among the trees. Then Lissa without a word went toward the house and disappeared indoors. She did

"Not much chance," he said.

not reappear, but neither did the secret man. Miss Moss thought she would know his form again. She fell to talking with Thayer, and when by and by the Inspector and Clint returned, she thought her time here had not been misspent.

Clint said eagerly: "I've seen her. Talked with her. She's a wonder!"

Miss Moss said: "Is she, Clint? That's fine." But she looked expectantly at the older man.

Inspector Tope without a word got into the car, and Clint took the wheel. They started back toward Boston.

"Accident?" Miss Moss asked presently.

Tope answered in an abstracted tone: "Doctor Derrie says so! He will call it accident, yes." He sighed, as though he were tired. "The trouble with me," he confessed, "I'm a meddling fool."

"What is it?" she asked. "What disturbs you?"

He wagged his head doubtfully. "I don't know," he admitted. "Here's a woman dead, and as far as you can see, there's no mystery about it. But there are a lot of little things, strange, unusual—"

Miss Moss asked: "What are they? That Miss Leaford should run for a doctor, without stopping to dress, for instance?"

The old man made a gesture as though to brush away an annoying swarm of mosquitoes. "Why, that, yes," he agreed. "Then the telephone was out of order, and the electric light went out at the wrong time, and the front door of the house blew open in spite of the fact it was always bolted at night. And then this man that lives up here in the woods—"

Miss Moss broke in with a question: "What is he like? What did you think of him?"

"He's a strong man," answered Tope, "doing nothing. Lives up there alone, writes poetry for fun, tramps around the woods, and looks at Miss Leaford as though she meant a lot to him. He told me that now that her mother is dead, he had a mind to take June away from here."

Clint cried angrily: "He did? That—tramp! I'll—"

Miss Moss asked acutely: "If he's so fond of Miss Leaford, what does he think of the rest of the Kenesaw connection?"

Tope chuckled. "He talked quite a lot about them," he admitted. "He seemed to know them pretty well, know a lot about them. He says old Mrs. Bowdon and her daughter, Mrs. Taine, have things their own way up there. He said they were like people living in the valley below a big dam. Bowdon is a wealthy man, and Hurder too; and their money is like the water behind the dam, waiting to flow down the valley when they die, flow into new channels. The others all sit there waiting for the dam to break, with their buckets ready to catch the overflow, afraid they'll let a few drops get away."

Miss Moss said softly: "That's why they're afraid!"

Tope looked at her in quick attention. "Eh?" he exclaimed. "Why should they be afraid? After all, the money can't get out of the family."

"Having things makes people afraid," she reminded him. "A man with nothing to lose has nothing to fear."

Tope shook his head. "I don't know," he demurred. "It's mighty easy to be afraid . . . There's one other thing—probably no connection. But when Clint and I were on our way in to Glovere's cabin, we saw a man in the woods. He was coming down the path toward us; but he spotted us, about as soon as we saw him, a hundred yards away or so. And he ducked to one side, out of the way, and kept out of sight while we went by."

"Why didn't you speak to him?"

"Clint here was in a hurry to go on," the Inspector chuckled.

"I didn't even see this man," Clint explained. "I think the Inspector imagined him. He's seeing things today, anyway."

Miss Moss sat thoughtful for a while; but she said at last, smiling: "He didn't imagine this. I saw your man come out of the woods. The garage proprietor has a daughter. He calls her Lissa. I think that was her young man. She was with me when he came in sight, but she left me then, and neither of them reappeared."

Tope chuckled. "Trust you to dig up any romance that's lying around!" he exclaimed. "Don't know who it was, do you?"

"No, but I know Lissa Thayer was troubled by his coming," Miss Moss declared. "That was plain, in her eyes." And she asked: "This Mr. Glovere—how old did you think he was?"

The Inspector watched her. "Forty-five and up," he said. "Maybe ten years more."

"Old enough to be Miss Leaford's father," Miss Moss reflected. And she added, still smiling: "You see, I begin to wonder about things too, Inspector. I've caught the habit from you." She ceased to smile. "I'm wondering now," she said gravely, "how many of these tablets it would take, to kill a person so quickly."

The Inspector looked at Miss Moss with a sort of wonder. He said at last:

"Mrs. Tope, you make me feel like a man on crutches. You can jump farther, and straighter, than anyone I ever saw."

"I was just wondering," she protested, her cheek bright with pleasure in his praise.

"I think you've hit it," he said. "Derrie missed it, and Heale, and so did I. But I think you've hit it on the nose, We'll see." He looked ahead. "Clint, pull in at the first drug-store," he said. "I want to telephone."

When he came out to them again, Clint asked quickly: "Did you call Doctor Derrie?"

"I called Doc Gero," Tope explained. This was the Medical Examiner with whom the old man had worked for so many years. "Doctor Gero thinks that it would need eight or ten tablets, maybe more, to have killed Mrs. Leaford so soon. He said if one was a dose, and three made her pretty sick, four or five might put her into a coma so that she would die in twenty-four hours or so. Specially if she had a weak heart.

"But to be dead in three hours, that would need eight or ten tablets, and maybe more."

His tone had the finality of doom. "And there weren't that many tablets left in the bottle!" he concluded.

Miss Moss said in a low tone: "I was afraid so. Then it was murder. What will you do?"

Tope shook his head. "Why," he said, "I guess we'll have to go back." He chuckled in a dry mirth. "It looks like I'd have to annoy young Doc Derrie again."

When they came back to headquarters, Heale was there.

"Now what is it, Tope?" he asked patiently.

Tope hesitated; he said then: "Here's the sticker, Heale. Miss Leaford gave her mother two tablets. There were two more left, in the bottle in the bathroom cabinet. And Doctor Derrie figures the dead woman got up and took those two. That's right, isn't it?"

Heale nodded. "Yes," he said.

"Now then," Tope explained, "two and two make four. If Doctor Derrie's right, she took four tablets. And two or three hours later she was dead."

"Sure," Heale repeated.

Tope leaned back in his chair. "Then here's the rest of it," he said. "You know Doctor Gero, the Medical Examiner in town?"

"Of course."

"Well, Doctor Gero says it would take at least six, and more likely eight or ten tablets to kill this woman dead in three hours."

Inspector Heale looked at Tope, frowning a little, for a long time. He started to shake his head; then abruptly he lifted the telephone beside him.

"Get me Doctor Cabler," he directed; and presently: "Doctor Cabler? Inspector Heale speaking. I'd like to consult you on this Leaford case. Can you come down? . . . Thanks." He returned the receiver to its hook again. "Doctor Cabler will know," he told them.

Tope nodded. "The bottle's missing," he reminded Inspector Heale. "That may have significance or not. Have you been in the house, searched the bedroom?"

Heale shook his head. "No excuse to do that," he protested. "So far as we knew officially, it was an accident. I don't want to antagonize those people unnecessarily, Tope. You can see that."

"I'd like to look around in there," Tope confessed. "Unofficially. Without their knowing."

Inspector Heale grinned. "Not much chance," he said.

Miss Moss spoke for the first time. "When is the funeral?" she inquired.

"It might be managed then," Inspector Heale agreed. "If they all go. Of course, they'll lock the house. They have no servants. We'll have to get someone to arrange it so we can get in."

"Miss Leaford will do that," Clint proposed.

"I'd rather try Asa Taine," Inspector Heale decided. "He might be reasonable. I know him better than I know any of the others." He lifted the telephone. "I'll send one of the boys to ask him to come down," he said.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Washington Loved to Ride After Foxes And Attend Cockfights, Diary Reveals

John Peel is the hero of the English hunting song, but to American fox hunters George Washington is almost a patron saint. This fact is brought to light by Samuel J Henry in "Foxhunting Is Different," a volume on the sport in Virginia and Maryland, in which Washington's diaries are used as background for many sketches.

"George Washington, many-sided man, attended a cockfight and a vestry meeting on the same day," writes the author. "He would go to church and enter in his diary the pious duty as performed. But he said not who the preacher was nor subject of the sermon. Foxes, hounds and hunting were matters that loomed large in his philosophy, and there is detail after detail.

"You cannot help loving Washington when you read his diaries, an unstudied record of day-to-day happenings. The man stands forth alive . . . Despite the treatment he has received at the hands of historians, who have made him an aloof and detached god to a fellow-lover of sport the Virginian seems a departed friend, a human and responsive character with whom he has spent many happy hours afield; for foxhunters . . . speak the same language.

"In the carefree years of 1768-69-70, the Virginian planted and reaped, bred horses, experimented with the soil, ingeniously sought to devise a better plow . . . With meticulous detail he tells about each hunt, how long it lasted, whether the quarry was lost, denned or killed, of hounds switching from fox to deer, and says they once got after a bear."

Washington's huntsman was a little Negro named Billy Lee, a former jockey, who, according to this authority, after his master died, "drank himself to death, dying of the D. T.'s."

Snow and Blue Geese

Unlike Canada geese, the snows seldom fly in V-formation. Adult snow geese have pure white bodies with black wingtips, with pink or pale purplish bills. Blue geese, about the same size as snows, have white heads and necks, grayish-brown bodies (not blue as the name indicates), dark red bills and purplish-red legs. The young are sooty-gray or brown.

WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON

NEW YORK.—Perhaps it is the heat, general, it seems, throughout the civilized world these days, or more likely it is one of those waves of human aspiration that sometime sweep the world. At any rate in announcing intention to return to Antarctica to seek to learn some of the primal secrets hidden in the interior of the continent at the bottom of the world, Lincoln Ellsworth shares ambition with Admiral Byrd, as with British, Norwegian, French and Argentinan flyer-explorers. Difference is that, whereas Mr. Ellsworth's motives are purely scientific, in other cases international politics in their relation to geographical claims are the incentives.

Born in Wealth, Ellsworth Picks Hazardous Life

Love of adventures manifested when yet in his 'teens sent Ellsworth forth to explore unknown regions in different parts of the world. Scion of wealthy parents, born in Chicago in 1880, he could have ordered his career, had he wished, along many lines less strenuous and of fewer hazards than the one he chose and in which he has become so distinguished. He came east to a crack seat of secondary learning, the Hill school, Pottstown, Pa., and upon graduation entered Columbia where he won scholastic honors in the department of civil engineering. But, becoming restive under the sedentary routine of student life, he did not wait to be graduated.

Faring forth into the wild, he became an axman on the first Grand Trunk Pacific railway survey of the transcontinental route across Canada. For five years he saw the virgin land of the Northwest, lived among Indians, shared the hardships of pioneers. In 1907 he became resident engineer of the Grand Trunk at Prince Rupert, B. C.

But his work, filled though it was with hardship and adventure, was not enough. Restlessness was in his soul and the unknown beckoned. So 1909 found him in the Peace river district in northern Canada, prospecting for gold. Then the World war came and, seeking action, he went to France where he became an aviator long before the United States entered the strife.

The real turning point in his career came with his meeting with Raoul Amundsen in Paris in 1924. With the great Norwegian explorer he participated in various expeditions culminating in 1926 with the famous flight in a dirigible over the North pole. Since then subsequent trips of exploration won him enhanced fame and added thrilling chapters to a gallant life of action.

PROFESSOR J. B. S. HALDANE, the famous British biochemist, who just now offers to sit inside an air-raid shelter while it is bombed from the outside, is the only living test-tube—still unscarred.

Scientist Balks At Nothing, as Yet Unscarred

Last month he sealed himself in an air-tight chamber for 14 hours to learn how the victims of the Thetis submarine disaster felt in their last hours. He once ate an ounce of ammonium chloride a day, survived it and learned a lot about tetanus and saving children's lives. Studying fatigue, he shut himself for long periods in a tight chamber, the air charged with carbon dioxide. Tracing effects of acid on the body, he ate daily three ounces of bicarbonate of soda, following it with a chaser of hydrochloric acid, diluted with water. Twice gassed in the World war, he seemed to enjoy himself a lot, writing down his sensations with Gusto and later qualifying as an expert on mustard and other gases.

With all that, he hasn't a scratch on him and doesn't suffer even from indigestion. Husky and vigorous, he doubles as guinea pig and a writer, the latter pursuit greatly enhancing his fame, notably with his book Daedalus, which was quite a sensation in this country in 1924. He experiments on his mind just as he does on his body. He is moved mainly by the idea that we know precious little about life and death and the human body and mind, and that in the short time allotted to us we ought to try anything once, which he consistently does. He is a spirited writer, giver to epigrams, and is known as the G. B. Shaw of Science.

The son of a distinguished Scottish scientist, he was educated at Oxford and gained increasing reputation before he was 30. He is 47.

(Consolidated Features—WNU Service.)

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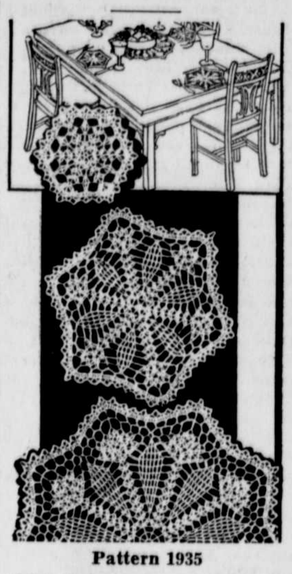

Pattern 1935

Add that touch of luxury that marks a well-kept home. Crochet a large lace doily for a centerpiece—a large and two medium-sized ones for buffet set—three sizes repeated for a luncheon set! The large doily measures 18 inches, the medium one 12 inches and the small 6 inches. Pattern 1935 contains directions for making doilies; illustrations of them and of stitches; materials required; photograph of doily.

Send 15 cents in coins for this pattern to The Sewing Circle Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York.

INDIGESTION

Sensational Relief from Indigestion and *One Dose* Proves It

If the first dose of this pleasant-tasting little black tablet doesn't bring you the fastest and most complete relief you have experienced send bottle back to us and get DOUBLE MONEY BACK. This Bell-ans tablet helps the stomach digest food, makes the excess stomach fluids harmless and lets you eat the nourishing foods you need. For heartburn, sick headache and upsets so often caused by excess stomach fluids making you feel sour and sick all over—JUST ONE DOSE of Bell-ans proves speedy relief. 25c everywhere.

Real Nobility

If a man be endowed with a generous mind, this is the best kind of nobility.—Plato.

How Women in Their 40's Can Attract Men

Here's good advice for a woman during her change (usually from 38 to 52), who fears she'll lose her appeal to men, who worries about hot flashes, loss of pep, dizzy spells, upset nerves and moody spells.

Get more fresh air, 8 hrs. sleep and if you need a good general system tonic take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made *especially for women*. It helps Nature build up physical resistance, thus helps give more vivacity to enjoy life and assist calming jittery nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

Father of Pleasure

Novelty is the great parent of pleasure.—South.

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Greatest Want

He that wants hope is the poorest man alive.

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.

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