

The BLIND MAN'S EYES

BY
WILLIAM MACHARG AND EDWIN BALMER

Illustrations by R.H. Livingstone

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(Continued from last week.)

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Gabriel Warden, Seattle capitalist, tells his butler he is expecting a caller, to be admitted without question. He informs his wife of danger that threatens him if he pursues a course he considers the only honorable one. Warden leaves the house in his car and meets a man whom he takes into the machine. When the car returns home, Warden is found dead, murdered, and alone. The caller, a young man, has been at Warden's house, but leaves unobserved.

CHAPTER II.—Bob Connery, conductor, receives orders to hold train for a party. Five men and a girl board the train. The father of the girl, Mr. Dorne, is the person for whom the train was held. Philip D. Eaton, a young man, also boarded the train. Dorne tells his daughter and his secretary, Don Avery, to find out what they can concerning him.

CHAPTER III.—The two make Eaton's acquaintance. The train is stopped by snowdrifts.

At Francroft—the station where he was to exchange the ordinary plow which so far had sufficed, and couple on the "rotary" to fight the mountain drifts ahead—Connery swung himself down from the train, looked in at the telegraph office and then went forward to the two giant locomotives, on whose sweating, monstrous backs the snow, suddenly visible in the haze of their lights, melted as it fell. As they started, he swung aboard and in the brightly lighted men's compartment of the first Pullman checked up his report sheets with a stub of pencil.

Again they stopped—once more went on. Connery, having put his papers into his pocket, dozed, awoke, dozed again. The progress of the train halted again and again; several times it backed, charged forward again—only to stop, back and charge again and then go on. But this did not disturb Connery. Then something went wrong.

All at once he found himself, by a trainman's instinctive and automatic action, upon his feet; for the shock had been so slight as barely to have awakened any of the sleeping passengers in their berths. He went to the door of the car, lifted the platform stop, threw open the door of the vestibule and hanging himself by one hand to the rail, swung himself out from the side of the car and looked ahead. He saw the forward end of the two locomotives wrapped in clouds of steam, and men arm-deep in snow wallowing forward to the rotary still farther to the front, and the sight conformed fully to his apprehension that this halt was more important and likely to last much longer than those that had gone before.

CHAPTER IV

Are You Hillward?

The bell in the washroom at the end of the car was ringing violently, and someone was reinforcing his ring with a stentorian call for "Porter! Porter!"

Eaton realized that it was very cold in his berth—also that the train, which was standing still, had been in that motionless condition for some time. He threw up the window curtain and he appreciated that, and, looking out, found that he faced a great unbroken bank of glistening white snow as high as the top of the car at this point and rising even higher ahead. He listened, therefore, while the Englishman—for the porter was his—extracted all available information from the negro.

"Porter, where are we?"

"Between Francroft and Simons, suh."

"Yet?"

"Yessuh, yit!"

"That foolish snow still?"

"Yessuh, and snow some more, suh?"

"But haven't we the plow still ahead?"

"Oh, yessuh; the plow's ahead. We still got it; but that's all, suh. It ain't doin' much; it's busted."

"Eh—what?"

"Yessuh—busted! There was right smart of a slide across the track, and the crew, I understands, diagnosed it 'jus' fo' a snow bank and done backed right into it. But they was rock in this, suh; we's layin' right below a hill; and that rock 'jus' busted that rotary like a Belgium shell hit it."

"Yessuh—pieces of that rotary essentially scattered themselves in four directions besides backwards and forwards. We ain't done much travellin' since then."

Eaton no longer paid attention.

"Snowed in and stopped since four!" The realization startled him with the necessity of taking it into account in his plans. He jerked himself up in his berth and began pulling his clothes down from the hooks; then, as abruptly, he stopped dressing and sat absorbed in thought. He had let himself sink back against the pillows, while he stared, unseeing, at the solid bank of snow beside the car, when the door at the farther end of

the coach opened and Conductor Connery entered, calling a name.

"Mr. Hillward! Mr. Lawrence Hillward! Telegram for Mr. Hillward!"

Eaton started at the first call of the name; he sat up and faced about.

The conductor was opposite Section Three; Eaton now waited tensely and delayed until the conductor was past; then putting his head out of his curtains he hailed as the conductor was going through the door.

"What name? Who is that telegram for?"

"Mr. Lawrence Hillward."

"Oh, thank you; then that's mine."

Connery held back. "I thought your name was Eaton."

"It is, Mr. Hillward—Lawrence Hillward—is an associate of mine who expected to make this trip with me but could not. So I should have telegrams or other communications addressed to him. Is there anything to sign?"

"No, sir—train delivery."

Eaton drew his curtains close again and ripped the envelope open; but before reading the message he observed with alarm that his pajama jacket had opened across the chest, and a small round scar, such as that left by a high-powered bullet penetrating, was exposed. He gasped almost audibly, realizing this, and clapped his hand to his chest and buttoned his jacket. The message—nine words without signature—lay before him:

"Thicket knot youngster omniscient issue foliage lecture tragic instigation."

It was some code which Eaton recognized but could not decipher at once. The conductor was still standing in the aisle.

"When did you get this?" Eaton asked, looking out.

"Just now. That message came through yesterday some time and was waiting for you at Simons; when we got them this morning they sent it on."

"I see; thanks," Eaton, assured that if the conductor had seen anything he suspected no significance in what he saw, closed his curtains and buttoned them carefully. The conductor moved on. Eaton took a small English-Chinese pocket dictionary from his vest pocket and opened it under cover of the blanket; counting five words up from "thicket" he found "they"; five down from "knot" gave him "know"; six up from "youngster" was "you"; six down from "omniscient" was "one"; seven up from "issue" was "is"; and so continuing, he translated the words to:

"They know you. One is following. Leave train instantly."

Eaton, nervous and jerky, as he completed the first six words, laughed as he completed the final three. "Leave train instantly!" The humor of that advice in his present situation, as he looked out the window at the solid bank of snow, appealed to him. A waiter from the dining car came back, announcing the first call for breakfast, and spurred him into action. Passengers from the Pullman at the rear passed Eaton's section for the diner. He heard Harriet Dorne's voice in some quiet conventional remark to the man who followed her. Eaton started at it; then he dressed swiftly and hurried into the now deserted washroom and then on to breakfast.

Harriet Dorne was sitting facing the door at the second of the larger tables; opposite her, and with his back to Eaton, sat Donald Avery. A third place was laid beside the girl, as though they expected Dorne to join them; but they had begun their fruit without waiting. The girl glanced up as Eaton halted in the doorway; her blue eyes brightened with a look part friendliness, part purpose. "Oh, Mr. Eaton," she smiled, "wouldn't you like to sit with us? I

don't think Father is coming to breakfast now; and if he does, of course here's still room."

She pulled back the chair beside her, and Eaton accepted it.

"Good morning, Mr. Avery," he said.

Miss Dorne's companion formally as he sat down, and the man across the table murmured something perforce.

As Eaton ordered his breakfast, he appreciated for the first time that his coming had interrupted a conversation—or rather a sort of monologue of complaint on the part of Standish addressed impersonally to Avery.

They engaged in conversation as they breakfasted—a conversation in which Avery took almost no part though Miss Dorne tried openly to draw him in; then the sudden entrance of Connery, followed closely by a stout, brusque man who belonged to the rear Pullman, took Eaton's attention and hers.

"Which is him?" the man with Connery demanded loudly.

Connery checked him, but pointed at the same time to Eaton.

"That's him, is it?" the other man said. "Then go ahead."

Eaton observed that Avery, who had turned in his seat, was watching this diversion on the part of the conductor with interest. Connery stopped beside Eaton's seat.

"You took a telegram for Lawrence Hillward this morning," he asserted.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it was mine, or meant for me, as I said at the time. My name is Eaton; but Mr. Hillward expected to make this trip with me."

The stout man with the conductor forced himself forward.

"That's pretty good, but not quite good enough!" he charged. "Conductor, get that telegram for me!"

Eaton got up, controlling himself under the insult of the other's manner.

"What business is it of yours?" he demanded.

"What business? Why, only that Mr. Lawrence Hillward—that's all, my friend! What are you up to, anyway? Lawrence Hillward traveling with you; I never set eyes on you until I saw you on this train; and you take my telegram!" The charge was made loudly and distinctly; every one in the dining car—Eaton could not see every one, but he knew it was so—had put down fork or cup or spoon and was staring at him.

"What did you do it for? What did you want with it?" the stout man blared on.

"Did you think I wasn't on the train? What?"

Eaton felt he was paling as he faced the blustering smaller man. He realized that the passengers he could see—those at the smaller tables—already had judged his explanation and found him wanting; the others unquestionably had done the same. Avery was gazing up at him with a sort of contented triumph.

"The telegram was for me, Conductor," he repeated.

"Get that telegram, Conductor!" the stout man demanded again.

"I suppose," Connery suggested, "you have letters or a card or something. Mr. Eaton, to show your relationship to Lawrence Hillward."

"No, I have not."

Connery gazed from one claimant to the other. "Will you give this gentleman the telegram?" he asked Eaton.

"I will not."

"Then I shall furnish him another copy; it was received here on the train by our express clerk as the operator. I'll go forward and get him another copy."

"That's for you to decide," Eaton said; and as though the matter was closed for him, he resumed his seat. He was aware that, throughout the car the passengers were watching him curiously.

"Are you ready to go back to our car now, Harriet?" Avery inquired when she had finished her breakfast, though Eaton was not yet through.

"Surely there's no hurry about anything today," the girl returned. They waited until Eaton had finished.

"Shall we all go back to the observation car and see if there's a walk down the track or whether it's snowed over?" she said impartially to the two. They went through the Pullmans together.

The first Pullman contained four or five passengers; the next, in which Eaton had his berth, was still empty as they passed through. The next Pullman also, at first glance, seemed to have been deserted in favor of the diner forward or of the club-car farther back. The porter had made up all the berths there also, except one; but someone was still sleeping behind the curtains of Section Three, for a man's hand hung over the aisle. It was a gentleman's hand, with long, well-formed fingers, sensitive and at the same time strong. That was the berth of Harriet Dorne's father; Eaton was the last of the three to pass, and so the others did not notice his start; but so strong was the fascination of the hand in the aisle that it before going on into the last car. Some eight or ten passengers—men and women—were lounging in the easy-chairs of the observation room; a couple, ulstered and fur-capped, were standing on the platform gazing back from the train.

The canyon through the snowdrifts, bored by the giant rotary plow the night before, was almost filled; drifts of snow eight or ten feet high and in places, pointing still higher, came up to the rear of the train; the end of the platform itself was buried under three feet of snow; the men standing on the platform could barely look over the higher drifts.

"There's no way from the train in that direction now," Harriet Dorne lamented as she saw this. "What shall we do with ourselves?"

"Cribbage, Harriet? You and I?" Avery invited.

She shook her head. "If we have to play cards, get a fourth and make it auction; but must it be cards? Isn't there some way we can get out for a walk?"

"There's the top of the cars, Miss Dorne," Eaton suggested. "If we could get up these, we'd get a fairly decent walk and see everything."

"Good!" the girl applauded. "How do we get up?"

"I'll see the conductor about it," Eaton offered; and before Avery could discuss it, he started back through the train.

CHAPTER V

The Hand in the Aisle.

The man whose interest in the passenger in Section Three of the last sleeper was most definite and understandable and, therefore, most openly avowed, was Conductor Connery. Connery had passed through the Pullman several times during the morning, had seen the hand which hung out into the aisle from between the curtains; but the only definite thought that came to him was that Dorne was a sound sleeper.

Nearly all the passengers had now breakfasted. Connery, therefore, took a seat in the diner, breakfasted leisurely and after finishing, walked back through the train. Dorne by now must be up, and might wish to see the conductor.

As Connery entered the last sleeper his gaze fell on the dial of pointers which, communicating with the push-buttons in the different berths, tell the porter which section is calling him, and he saw that while all the other arrows were pointing upward, the arrow marked "3" was pointing down. Dorne was up, then—for this was the arrow denoting his berth—or at least was awake and had recently rung his bell.

Connery looked in upon the porter, who was cleaning up the washroom.

"Section Three's getting up?" he asked.

"No, Mistah Connery—not yet," the porter answered.

"What did he ring for?" Connery looked to the dial, and the porter came out of the washroom and looked at it also.

"For the lan's sake. I didn't hear no ring, Mistah Connery. It mus' have been when I was out on the platform."

"Answer it, then," Connery directed.

As the negro started to obey, Connery followed him into the open car. He could see over the negro's shoulder the hand sticking out into the aisle, and this time, at sight of it, Connery started violently. If Dorne had rung, he must have moved; a man who is awake does not let his hand hang out in the aisle. Yet the hand had not moved. The long, sensitive fingers fell in precisely the same position as before, stiffly separated a little one from another; they had not changed their position at all.

"Wait!" Connery seized the porter by the arm. "I'll answer it myself."

He dismissed the negro and waited until he had gone. He looked about and assured himself that the car, except for himself and the man lying behind the curtains of Section Three, was empty. Walking briskly as though he were carelessly passing up the aisle, he brushed hard against the hand and looked back, exclaiming an apology for his carelessness.

The hand fell back heavily, inertly, and resumed its former position and hung as white and lifeless as before. No response to the apology came from behind the curtains; the man in the berth had not roused. Connery rushed back to the curtains and touched the hand with his fingers. It was cold! He seized the hand and felt it all over; then, gasping, he parted the curtains and looked into the berth. He stared; his breath whistled out; his shoulders jerked, and he drew back, instinctively pressing his two clenched hands against his chest and the pocket which held President Jarvis' order.

The man in the berth was lying on his right side facing the aisle; the left side of his face was thus exposed; and it had been crushed in by a violent blow from some heavy weapon which, too blunt to cut the skin and bring blood, had fractured the cheekbone and bludgeoned the temple. The proof of murderous violence was so plain that the conductor, as he saw the face in the light, recoiled with staring eyes, white with horror.

He looked up and down the aisle to assure himself that no one had entered the car during his examination; then he carefully drew the curtains together again, and hurried to the forward end of the car, where he had left the porter.

"Lock the rear door of the car," he commanded. "Then come back here."

(To be Continued.)

FINEST EVER.

Does Jack send you good Christmas presents?

The finest I ever exchanged.

30

Christmas Cake Decorations.

To make attractive Christmas cake decorations, lightly butter the under side of perfect holly leaves, then coat with icing and let dry. When dry the icing will come off shaped and volume like the leaf. Make into a wreath by joining with icing stems.

"The Watchman" gives all the news while it is news.



Impulse Dodds, "Impulse Dodds," cattleman, was in Chicago, with his big sale over. And even in Chicago, where sight-seeing cattlemen were common, Impulse Dodds was a noticeable figure, with his six feet odd, free money ways, and almost perpetual smile.

He paused in front of a small, narrow store, whose one window was full of toys. Inside, the counter and shelves were packed with the same kind of goods.

"Just Santa," said Impulse, aloud. "Believe I'll go in."

He closed his fingers tightly and pushed open the door with his thumb, stiffly extended.

"Put in his thumb," he grinned, "and does he pull out a plum?"

In the shop were two men, the one in front of the counter loud-voiced and threatening. "Well, this one is finishing, as Impulse entered, 'I'll give you just two more days to meet your bill, till the day after Christmas. If you don't pay me in full then, I will take possession.'"

As the man stalked out, Impulse raised his right foot and swung it back and forth thoughtfully.

"Can I show you anything, sir?" he asked a moment later as Impulse turned to the counter with a half-regretful frown on his face, adding: "It's just as well you didn't do it, sir. He's a very vindictive man."

"That so? Then I sure wish I had. I don't generally hold back on things, but this city's getting me right scared. I've reined up unusual the last three days. Now 'bout the toys. That man's talk is so easy unraveled. I reckon you'll sell cheap?"

"At almost your own price, sir. There is only this one day to sell, and I can't hope to do enough. I've seen failure for a week past, though for a while I did hope to come out in condition to start again. Now what can I show you?"

"Well, not only one solitary thing in particular, I reckon," scanning the shelves judiciously. "They all look right enticing, and what I didn't buy would make me feel sorry to look at. What'll you take for the bunch?"

The storekeeper moved along the counter, trying to arrange his goods more attractively.

"Look around all you want to," he said amiably. "And there is an easy chair back yonder where you can sit and rest, if you like."

Impulse followed him.

"No wonder you can't sell, if you treat all customers like me," he complained. "Now, see here," slapping a big roll of bills on the counter. "How

present by and by," he called to the rapidly increasing crowd of urchins. "Mind, you'll owe it in part to them. Now stampee into the streets and alleys of the neighborhood and corral every boy and girl you can find, and bring 'em here. Just an hour from now this store'll commence to give out presents, and you'll all get one. Nobody will be missed. On the street now, the whole lot of you except these two."

In an hour, the door was thrown open and the rush began, with half a thousand whooping youngsters to make the assault. It was short work, the pillaging of the store, and in forty minutes all was over. And then, just as the hilarious present bearers were scattering into every street and alley, an automobile swerved out from the street traffic and stopped at the curb. In it were an old gentleman and a lady and several girls. The gentleman motioned some of the urchins to the side of the car, where they were questioned as to the extraordinary spectacle. Then a few words passed between the occupants of the car, after which one of the girls alighted and came to the store. Crawfish Bobby and Raggy Sally were just outside the door, with their arms full.

"You're the little Santa's," smiled the young lady, as she took their hands, "and I just know you had a big time." Then she entered the store and went straight to Impulse.

"Mr. Santa Claus, I believe, sir?" she began.

"Why—er—no," stammered Impulse, turning red, "only—er—just as a sort of advance agent, named Impulse—I mean Tommy Dodds."

The girl broke into a ringing laugh. "Impulse! I like that," she cried. "Now, Impulse Dodds, have you any definite arrangement for the Christmas holidays—any binding engagement, I mean?"

"No-o, nothing except to tramp sidewalks and say 'Howdy' to every stranger who'll let me."

"Good! Then there's nothing in the way of our invitation. You see, we're having a houseful of company for the holiday week, and papa and mamma suggested that I ask you. Papa owns a ranch out West, and he thinks a man who can do what you've just done will certainly be an acquisition to our party. And I may add we all feel the same way. You'll come? There is room in our machine."

Impulse nodded. He lacked words fitting to the occasion. A week at a house party! Gee! wouldn't that be stuff to tell the boys at the ranch. Start back the day after Christmas? Who? He? No, siree! That would be rank foolishness. Not till the last gun was fired.

So he walked out to the automobile with the girl, with never a thought of the emptied store behind, or of the beaming, misty-eyed man who could now stock up again without the baleful skeleton of a creditor to glare at him over the goods. And as Dodd entered the automobile, one of the girls afterwards declared that she heard him murmur, "And pulled out a plum," though she could not understand why. It was just one of his funny ways.

time the other hand was coming from his pocket with all the coins his fingers could grasp. These were tossed into the air. By the time they had ceased jingling on the sidewalk, fifty more or less grimy little hands were clutched for them.

"Now, you bunch," called Impulse, "just listen to me for a minute. Who's the most no 'count boy in this neighborhood?"

"Crawfish Bobby," answered a voice promptly. "He never stands treat, an' carries every cent home to his ma-a-a."

"And the most unpopular girl?"

There was a short silence, then several of the boys tittered.

"Raggy Sally," said one of them. "She's Peanut Seller Bet's girl, an' when we boys throw mud she fights like a wildcat."

"And gives all of you a mighty good drubbing, I hope," commented Impulse. "Now, boys, the two who bring Crawfish Bobby and Raggy Sally to me get a four-bit piece each, and tell them they'll get another for coming. Now, the lot of you come back, for the show isn't half over."

Ten minutes later, Crawfish Bobby and Raggy Sally stood in front of him. Impulse placed a hand upon a shoulder of each.

"These two are going to be little Santas and give you all a right nice

present by and by," he called to the rapidly increasing crowd of urchins. "Mind, you'll owe it in part to them. Now stampee into the streets and alleys of the neighborhood and corral every boy and girl you can find, and bring 'em here. Just an hour from now this store'll commence to give out presents, and you'll all get one. Nobody will be missed. On the street now, the whole lot of you except these two."

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