

# THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

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## SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Amidst numerous difficulties the servants deserted. As Miss Innes looked up for the night, she was startled by a dark figure on the veranda. She passed a terrible night, which was filled with unseemly noises. In the morning Miss Innes found a strange link cuff button in a clothes hamper. Gertrude and Halsey arrived with Jack Bailey. The house was awakened by a revolver shot. A strange man was found shot to death, in the hall. It proved to be the body of Arnold Armstrong, whose banker father owned the country house. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver on the lawn. He and Jack Bailey had disappeared. The link cuff button mysteriously disappeared. Detective Jamieson and the coroner arrived. Gertrude revealed that she was engaged to Jack Bailey, with whom she had talked in the billiard room a few moments before the murder. Jamieson told Miss Innes that she was hiding evidence from him. He imprisoned an intruder in an empty room. The prisoner escaped down a laundry chute. It developed that the intruder was probably a woman. Gertrude was suspected, for the intruder left a print of a bare foot. Gertrude returned home with her right ankle sprained. A negro found the other half of what proved to be Jack Bailey's cuff button. Halsey suddenly reappeared. He said he and Bailey had left because they had received a telegram. Gertrude said that she had given Bailey an unloaded revolver, fearing to give him Halsey's loaded weapon. Cashier Bailey of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested, charged with embezzlement.

## CHAPTER X.—Continued.

"In cash?"  
"In cash."  
"But the man who did it—he would be known?"  
"Yes, I tell you both, as sure as I stand here, I believe that Paul Armstrong looted his own bank. I believe he has a million at least, as the result, and that he will never come back. I'm worse than a pauper now. I can't ask Louise to share nothing a year with me, and when I think of this disgrace for her, I'm crazy."

The most ordinary events of life seemed pregnant with possibilities that day, and when Halsey was called to the telephone, I ceased all pretense at eating. When he came back from the telephone his face showed that something had occurred. He waited however, until Thomas left the dining room; then he told us.

"Paul Armstrong is dead," he announced gravely. "He died this morning in California. Whatever he did, he is beyond the law now."

Gertrude turned pale.  
"And the only man who could have cleared Jack can never do it!" she said despairingly.

"Also," I replied coldly, "Mr. Armstrong is for ever beyond the power of defending himself. When your Jack comes to me, with some \$200,000 in his hands, which is about what you have lost, I shall believe him innocent."

## CHAPTER XI.

### Halsey Makes a Capture.

It was about half-past eight when we left the dining room, and still engrossed with one subject, the failure of the bank and its attendant evils, Halsey and I went out into the grounds for a stroll. Gertrude followed us shortly. "The light was thickening," to appropriate Shakespeare's description of twilight, and once again the tree-toads and the crickets were making night throb with their tiny life. It was almost oppressively lonely, in spite of its beauty, and I felt a sickening pang of homesickness for my city at night—for the clatter of horses' feet on cemented paving, for the lights, the voices, the sound of children playing. The country after dark oppresses me. The stars, quite eclipsed in the city by the electric lights, here become insistent, assertive. Whether I want to or not, I find myself looking for the few I know by name, and feeling ridiculously new and small by contrast—always an unpleasant sensation.

After Gertrude joined us, we avoided any further mention of the murder. To Halsey, as to me, there was ever present, I am sure, the thought of our conversation of the night before. As we strolled back and forth along the drive, Mr. Jamieson emerged from the shadow of the trees.

"Good evening," he said, managing to include Gertrude in his bow. Gertrude had never been even ordinarily courteous to him, and she nodded coldly. Halsey, however, was more cordial, although we were all constrained enough. He and Gertrude went on together, leaving the detective to walk with me. As soon as they were out of earshot, he turned to me.

"Do you know, Miss Innes," he said, "the deeper I go into this thing, the more strange it seems to me. I am very sorry for Miss Gertrude. It looks as if Bailey, whom she has tried so hard to save, is worse than a rascal; and after her plucky fight for him, it seems hard."

I looked through the dusk to where Gertrude's light dinner dress gleamed among the trees. She had made a plucky fight, poor child. Whatever she might have been driven to do, I could find nothing but a deep sympathy for her. If she had only come to me with the whole truth then!

"Miss Innes," Mr. Jamieson was saying, "in the last three days, have you seen any suspicious figures around the grounds? Any woman?"  
"No," I replied. "I have a house-

ful of maids that will bear watching, one and all. But there has been no strange woman near the house or Liddy would have seen her, you may be sure. She has a telescopic eye."

Mr. Jamieson looked thoughtful.  
"It may not amount to anything," he said slowly. "It is difficult to get any perspective on things around here, because every one down in the village is sure he saw the murderer, either before or since the crime. And half of them will stretch a point or two as to facts, to be obliging. But the man who drives the hack down there tells a story that may possibly prove to be important."

"I have heard it, I think. Was it the one the parlor maid brought up yesterday, about a ghost wringing its hands on the roof? Oh perhaps it's the one the milk-boy heard, a tramp washing a dirty shirt, presumably bloody, in the creek below the bridge?"

I could see the gleam of Mr. Jamieson's teeth as he smiled.  
"Neither," he said. "But Matthew Geist, which is my friend's name, claims that on Saturday night, at 9:30, a veiled lady—"

"I knew it would be a veiled lady," I broke in.

"A veiled lady," he persisted, "who was apparently young and beautiful, engaged his hack and asked to be driven to Sunnyside. Near the gate, however, she made him stop, in spite of his remonstrances, saying she preferred to walk to the house. She paid

A few feet away in the hall was the spot where the body of Arnold Armstrong had been found. I was a bit nervous, and I put my hand on Halsey's sleeve. Suddenly, from the top of the staircase above us came the sound of a cautious footstep. At first I was not sure, but Halsey's attitude told me he had heard and was listening. The step, slow, measured, infinitely cautious, was nearer now. Halsey tried to loosen my fingers, but I was in a paralysis of fright.

The swish of a body against the curving rail, as if for guidance, was plain enough, and now whoever it was had reached the foot of the staircase and had caught a glimpse of our rigid silhouettes against the billiard room doorway. Halsey threw me off then and strode forward.

"Who is it?" he called imperiously, and took a half dozen rapid strides toward the foot of the staircase. Then I heard him mutter something; there was the crash of a falling body, the slam of the outer door, and, for an instant, quiet. I screamed, I think. Then I remember turning on the lights and finding Halsey, white with fury, trying to untangle himself from something warm and fleecy. He had cut his forehead a little on the lowest step of the stairs, and he was rather a ghastly sight. He flung the white object at me, and, jerking open the outer door, raced into the darkness.

Gertrude had come on hearing the noise, and now we stood, staring at each other over—of all things on



The Step, Slow, Measured, Infinitely Cautious, Was Nearer Now.

him, and he left her there. Now, Miss Innes, you had no such visitor, I believe?"

"None," I said decidedly.  
"Geist thought it might be a maid, as you had got a supply that day. But he said her getting out near the gate puzzled him. Anyhow, we have now one veiled lady, who, with the ghostly intruder of Friday night, makes two assets that I hardly know what to do with."

"It is mystifying," I admitted, "although I can think of one possible explanation. The path from the Greenwood club to the village enters the road near the lodge gate. A woman who wished to reach the Country club, unperceived, might choose such a method. There are plenty of women there."

I think this gave him something to ponder, for in a short time he said good night and left. But I myself was far from satisfied. I was determined, however, on one thing. If my suspicions—for I had suspicions—were true, I would make my own investigations, and Mr. Jamieson should learn only what was good for him to know.

We went back to the house, and Gertrude, who was more like herself since her talk with Halsey, sat down at the mahogany desk in the living room to write a letter. Halsey prowled up and down the entire east wing, now in the cardroom, now in the billiard room, and now and then blowing his clouds of tobacco smoke among the pink and gold hangings of the drawing room. After a little I joined him in the billiard room, and together we went over the details of the discovery of the body.

The cardroom was quite dark. Where we sat, in the billiard room, only one of the side brackets was lighted, and we spoke in subdued tones, as the hour and the subject seemed to demand. When I spoke of the figure Liddy and I had seen on the porch through the cardroom window Friday night, Halsey sauntered into the darkened room, and together we stood there, much as Liddy and I had done that other night.

The window was the same grayish rectangle in the blackness as before.

earth—a white silk and wool blanket, exquisitely fine! It was the most unghostly thing in the world, with its lavender border and its faint scent. Gertrude was the first to speak.

"Somebody—had it?" she asked.  
"Yes, Halsey tried to stop whoever it was and fell. Gertrude, that blanket is not mine. I have never seen it before."

She held it up and looked at it; then she went to the door on to the veranda and threw it open. Perhaps 100 feet from the house were two figures, that moved slowly toward us as we looked. When they came within range of the light, I recognized Halsey, and with him Mrs. Watson, the housekeeper.

## CHAPTER XII.

### One Mystery for Another.

The most commonplace incident takes on a new appearance if the attendant circumstances are unusual. There was no reason on earth why Mrs. Watson should not have carried a blanket down the east wing staircase, if she so desired. But to take a blanket down at 11 o'clock at night, with every precaution as to noise, and, when discovered, to fling it at Halsey and bolt—Halsey's word, and a good one—into the grounds—this made the incident more than significant.

They moved slowly across the lawn and up the steps. Halsey was talking quietly, and Mrs. Watson was looking down and listening. She was a woman of a certain amount of dignity, most efficient, so far as I could see, although Liddy would have found fault if she dared. But just now Mrs. Watson's face was an enigma. She was defiant, I think, under her mask of submission, and she still showed the effect of nervous shock.

"Mrs. Watson," I said severely, "will you be so good as to explain this rather unusual occurrence?"  
"I don't think it so unusual, Miss Innes." Her voice was deep and very clear; but it was somewhat tremulous. "I was taking a blanket down to Thomas, who is—not well tonight, and I used this staircase, as being nearer the path to the lodge. When



vested, and through an ugly stroy—Mr. Innes called and then rushed at me, I—I was alarmed, and flung the blanket at him."

Halsey was examining the cut on his forehead in a small mirror on the wall. It was not much of an injury, but it had bled freely, and his appearance was rather terrifying.

"Thomas ill?" he said, over his shoulder. "Why, I thought I saw Thomas out there as you made that cyclonic break out of the door and over the porch."

I could see that under pretense of examining his injury he was watching her through the mirror.

"Is this one of the servants' blankets, Mrs. Watson?" I asked, holding up its luxurious folds to the light.

"Everything else is locked away," she replied. Which was true enough, no doubt. I had rented the house without bed furnishings.

"If Thomas is ill," Halsey said, "some member of the family ought to go down to see him. You needn't bother, Mrs. Watson. I will take the blanket."

She drew herself up quickly, as if in protest, but she found nothing to say. She stood smoothing the folds of her dead black dress, her face as white as chalk above it. Then she seemed to make up her mind.

"Very well, Mr. Innes," she said. "Perhaps you would better go. I have done all I could."

And then she turned and went up the circular staircase, moving slowly and with a certain dignity. Below, the three of us stared at one another across the intervening white blanket.

"Upon my word," Halsey broke out, "this place is a walking nightmare. I have the feeling that we three outsiders who have paid our money for the privilege of staying in this spook-factory, are living on the very top of things. We're on the lid, so to speak. Now and then we get a sight of the things inside, but we are not a part of them."

"Do you suppose," Gertrude asked doubtfully, "that she really meant that blanket for Thomas?"

"Thomas was standing beside that magnolia tree," Halsey replied, "when I ran after Mrs. Watson. It's down to this, Aunt Ray. Rosie's basket and Mrs. Watson's blanket can only mean one thing: There is somebody hiding or being hidden in the lodge. It wouldn't surprise me if we hold the key to the whole situation now. Anyhow, I'm going to the lodge to investigate."

Gertrude wanted to go, too, but she looked so shaken that I insisted she should not. I sent for Liddy to help her to bed, and then Halsey and I started for the lodge. The grass was heavy with dew, and, man-like, Halsey chose the shortest way across the lawn. Half way, however, he stopped.

"We'd better go by the drive," he said. "This isn't a lawn; it's a field. Where's the gardener these days?"

"There isn't any," I said meekly. "We have been thankful enough, so far, to have our meals prepared and served and the beds aired. The gardener who belongs here is working at the club."

"Remind me to-morrow to send out a man from town," he said. "I know the very fellow."

I record this scrap of conversation, just as I have tried to put down anything and everything that had a bearing on what followed, because the gardener Halsey sent the next day played an important part in the events of the next few weeks—events that culminated as you know, by stirring the country profoundly. At that time, however, I was busy trying to keep my skirts dry, and paid little or no attention to what seemed then a most trivial remark.

At the lodge everything was quiet. There was a light in the sitting room downstairs, and a faint gleam, as if from a shaded lamp, in one of the upper rooms. Halsey stopped and examined the lodge with calculating eyes.

"I don't know, Aunt Ray," he said dubiously; "this is hardly a woman's affair. If there's a scrap of any kind, you hike for the timber." Which was Halsey's solicitous care for me, put into vernacular.

"I'll stay right here," I said, and crossing the small veranda, now shaded and fragrant with honeysuckle, I hammered the knocker on the door.

Thomas opened the door himself—Thomas, fully dressed and in his customary health. I had the blanket over my arm.

"I brought the blanket, Thomas," I said; "I am sorry you are so ill."  
The old man stood staring at me and then at the blanket. His confusion under other circumstances would have been ludicrous.

"What! Not ill?" Halsey said from the step. "Thomas, I'm afraid you've been malingering."

Thomas seemed to have been debating something with himself. Now he stepped out on the porch and closed the door gently behind him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Were Not Needed.  
"Scientists say that whiskey is not a cure for snake bites."  
"Then that must be the reason snakes were driven out of Ireland."

## The KITCHEN CABINET



IF ANY ask you what would satisfy to make life easy, thus I would reply: As much as keeps out hunger, thirst and cold.—Dryden.

## SELECTION OF FOODS.

Many housekeepers who pride themselves on their knowledge of the cuts of meat and can tell at a glance the hardy old farmyard veteran from the juicy young broiler, fall down completely when choosing fruits and vegetables. Berries which looked well in the market prove flat, stale and unprofitable. Melons and cucumbers outwardly attractive were only skin deep in good looks. Oranges and grapefruit are frequently overripe and peaches green. The wise selection of fruit is not learned in a day nor with one lesson. For the beginner there are a few points, which if observed will make the chances better of getting what one pays for and teach one how to tell the good from the bad.

The two chief tests are weight and fragrance. Ripe fruit has a fresh, sweet odor which is easily recognized. Fragrance is the best test to give to berries, as those without that delicate aroma should be regarded with suspicion. This is also true of lemons, oranges, peaches, pears, and especially of cantelopes.

When buying oranges, grapefruit and melons, weight is the important item; if light in weight, beware of them, they will either be pithy or unripe. If melons are spongy to the touch they are either unripe or stale. Cucumbers should never be purchased if spongy.

In selecting muskmelons the sweetest ones have a rough rind. The smooth streaks which divide the fruit into sections should be yellowish.



W E SCATTER seeds with careless hand, And dream we ne'er shall see them more; But for a thousand years their fruit appears In weeds that mar the land, or healthful store.

## EMERGENCY SALAD.

The ingredients for a salad are usually at hand, the vegetables left from dinner; if they have been served with a sauce, this can be washed off before putting away. Remnants of fruit that are not enough to serve as a fruit course make a delicious salad. Fruit is nice served with a heavy sirup, a French dressing or a mayonnaise. When serving a French dressing on fruit it is well to use lemon instead of vinegar, and whipped cream may be added just before serving.

Cold cooked string beans make a most satisfying salad with a little onion and a French dressing, all heaped daintily on crisp leaves of lettuce. For a beet salad cut enough cold cooked beets into dice to make three cupsful, put into a salad bowl, add five tablespoonfuls of olive oil, three tablespoonfuls of vinegar, a teaspoonful of salt and a few dashes of red pepper. Arrange on a bed of lettuce on a cold dish; pour the dressing over it and serve.

Celery and hard cooked eggs with a dressing make a wholesome salad.

## Tips for the Worker.

Never get careless about your work. Be cheerful over your work; nobody wants to hear of aches and pains.

Politeness costs little and brings in splendid returns.

Don't think you are indispensible. Notice the hole made in a pail of water when you draw out your finger? So will our places be filled when we go.

Be dependable; there is no quality so worth cultivation and often lacking in otherwise good people.

Cultivate a keen sense of humor it lightens many a burden and makes easy many rough roads.

## Egg Outlets, Cream Sauce.

Make a thick sauce with two tablespoonfuls of butter, three tablespoonfuls of flour, one and a half cupsful of milk. Cook until thick and well done. Have ready six hard cooked eggs coarsely chopped with a silver knife. To the sauce add a half teaspoonful of onion juice, a tablespoonful of chopped parsley and the eggs, then set aside to cool. Flour the hands, and mold in small outlets; dip in egg and crumbs and fry in deep fat. Serve with:

## Cucumber Salad.

Select even-sized cucumbers and cut a thick slice from each lengthwise without peeling them, scoop out the seeds and pulp and put aside; peel one or two tomatoes and cut up, drain off the juice and fill the cucumber shells with the red and white bits, lay each on a lettuce leaf, pour over a French dressing and serve very cold.

## Steved Bermuda Onions.

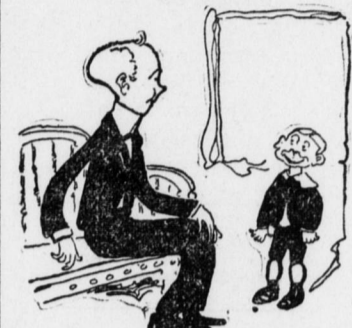
Melt two tablespoonfuls of butter in a saucepan and lay in six peeled Bermuda onions. Sprinkle with two teaspoonfuls each of salt and sugar. Cover with a cupful of stock and simmer until tender, adding boiling water as needed. Serve with the sauce poured around the onions.

Nellie Maxwell.

## MUNYON'S PAW-PAW LIVER PILLS

I want any person who suffers with biliousness, constipation, indigestion or any liver or blood ailment, to try my Paw-Paw Liver Pills. I guarantee they will purify the blood and put the liver and stomach into a healthful condition and will positively cure biliousness and constipation, or I will refund your money.—Munyon's Homeopathic Home Remedy Co., 53rd and Jefferson Sts., Phila., Pa.

## GAVE SIS AWAY.



Her Little Brother—Say, are you goin' ter marry my sister Bess?

Her Suitor—Why, er—er—er don't know.

Her Little Brother—Well, you are, I heard her tell pop she was goin' ter land you tonight.

## When Servants Were Slaves.

It hasn't been so many years since servants were practically slaves; they were bound out for a term of years and never could hope to better their conditions. The world is advancing, however, and now servants, especially those who do washing and housecleaning, are better treated. Easy Task laundry soap, that does half the work itself, and which cleans pots and pans and painted work like magic, is responsible for much of this emancipation. Only 5 cents a cake, too.

## Real Modesty.

"An actor should be modest, and most actors are," said James K. Hackett at a luncheon in Pittsburg. "But I know a young actor who, at the beginning of his career, carried modesty almost too far."

"This young man inserted in all the dramatic papers a want advertisement that said:

"Engagement wanted—small part such as dead body or outside shouts preferred."

## Faults in American Character.

In an address on botanical education in America, Prof. W. F. Ganong remarks that "disregard of particulars and a tendency to easy generalities are fundamental faults in American character," and he insists upon the necessity of laboratory and experimental work in all scientific study. Books "ease the wits," but independent observation is the source of sound knowledge in science.

## In the Suburb.

"What beautiful public building is that?"

"That isn't a public building. It's old man Savitt's summer cottage."

"And whose neat little cottage is that over there with the tower on it? The little one-story frame affair?"

"That isn't a cottage. It's the First Episcopal church."—Life.

## Thinking of Curtain Lectures.

Mrs. Peck—I see the Maine Agricultural college proposes to establish lectures especially for country pastors.

Mr. Peck—What's the matter, ain't none of the parsons up there married?

I have come to see that cleverness, success, attainment, count for little; that goodness, or character, is the important factor in life.—Romanes.

## Cut Out Breakfast Cooking

Easy to start the day cool and comfortable if

## Post Toasties

are in the pantry ready to serve right from the package. No cooking required; just add some cream and a little sugar.

Especially pleasing these summer mornings with berries or fresh fruit.

One can feel cool in hot weather on proper food.

## "The Memory Lingers"

POSTUM CEREAL CO., L.A.  
Battle Creek, Mich.