

# THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART  
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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 disappeared. 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. Halsey said Armstrong had wrecked his own bank, and was able to clear Bailey. A telegram contained news that Paul Armstrong was dead. Halsey trapped Mrs. Watson, the housekeeper, while she was stealing from the house.

## CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"I reckon you bettah come in Mis' Innes," he said, speaking cautiously. "It's got so I dunno what to do, and it's bound to come out some time er ruther."

He threw the door open then, and I stepped inside, Halsey close behind. In the sitting room the old negro turned with quiet dignity to Halsey.

"You bettah sit down, sah," he said. "It's a place for a woman, sah."

Things were not turning out the way Halsey expected. He sat down on the center-table, with his hands thrust in his pockets, and watched me as I followed Thomas up the narrow stairs. At the top a woman was standing, and a second glance showed me it was Rosie. She shrank back a little, but I said nothing. And then Thomas motioned to a partly open door, and I went in.

The lodge boasted of three bedrooms upstairs, all comfortably furnished. In this one, the largest and brightest, a night lamp was burning, and by its light I could make out a plain white metal bed. A girl was asleep there—or in a half stupor, for she muttered something now and then. Rosie had taken her courage in her hands, and coming in had turned up the light. It was only then that I knew. Fever-flushed, ill as she was, I recognized Louise Armstrong.

I stood gazing down at her in a stupor of amazement. Louise here, hiding at the lodge, ill and alone! Rosie came up to the bed and smoothed the white counterpane. "I am afraid she is worse to-night," she ventured at last. I put my hand on the sick girl's forehead. It was burning with fever, and I turned to where Thomas lingered in the hallway.

"Will you tell me what you mean, Thomas Johnson, by not telling me this before?" I demanded indignantly. Thomas quailed.

"Mis' Louise wouldn't let me," he said earnestly. "I wanted to. She ought to 'a' had a doctor the night she came, but she wouldn't hear to it. Is she very bad, Mis' Innes?"

"Bad enough," I said coldly. "Send Mr. Innes up."

Halsey came up the stairs slowly, looking rather interested and inclined to be amused. For a moment he could not see anything distinctly in the darkened room; he stopped, glanced at Rosie and at me, and then his eyes fell on the restless head on the pillow. I think he felt who it was before he really saw her; he crossed the room in a couple of strides and bent over the bed.

"Louise!" he said softly; but she did not reply, and her eyes showed no recognition. Halsey was young, and illness was new to him. He straightened himself slowly, still watching her, and caught my arm.

"She's dying, Aunt Ray!" he said huskily. "Dying! Why, she doesn't know me!"

"Fudge!" I snapped, being apt to grow irritable when my sympathies are aroused. "She's doing nothing of the sort—and don't pinch my arm. If you want something to do, go and choke Thomas."

But at that moment Louise roused from her stupor to cough, and at the end of the paroxysm, as Rosie laid her back, exhausted, she knew us. That was all Halsey wanted; to him consciousness was recovery. He dropped on his knees beside the bed, and tried to tell her she was all right, and we would bring her around in a hurry, and how beautiful she looked—only to break down utterly and have to stop. And at that I came to my senses, and put him out.

"This instant!" I ordered, as he hesitated. "And send Rosie here."

He did not go far. He sat on the top step of the stairs, only leaving to telephone for a doctor, and getting in everybody's way in his eagerness to fetch and carry. I got him away final-

ly, by sending him to fix up the car as a sort of ambulance, in case the doctor would allow the sick girl to be moved. He sent Gertrude down to the lodge loaded with all manner of impossible things, including an armful of Turkish towels and a box of mustard plasters, and as the two girls had known each other somewhat before, Louise brightened perceptibly when she saw Gertrude.

When the doctor from Englewood—the Casanova doctor, Dr. Walker, being away—had started for Sunnyside, and I had got Thomas to stop trying to explain what he did not understand himself, I had a long talk with the old man, and this is what I learned.

On Saturday evening before, about ten o'clock, he had been reading in the sitting room downstairs, when some one rapped at the door. The old man was alone, Warner not having arrived, and at first he was uncertain about opening the door. He did so finally, and was amazed at being confronted by Louise Armstrong. Thomas was an old family servant, having been with the present Mrs. Armstrong since she was a child, and he was overwhelmed at seeing Louise. He saw that she was excited and tired, and he drew her into the sitting room and made her sit down. After a while he went to the house and brought Mrs. Watson, and they talked until late. The old man said Louise was in trouble, and seemed frightened. Mrs. Watson made some tea and took it to the lodge, but Louise made them both promise to keep her presence a secret. She had not known that Sunnyside was rented, and whatever her trouble

her stepfather and the prospect of the immediate return of the family, things had become more and more impossible. I gathered that Thomas was as relieved as I at the turn events had taken. No, she did not know of either of the deaths in the family.

Taken all around, I had only substituted one mystery for another. If I knew now why Rosie had taken the basket of dishes, I did not know who along the drive. If I knew that Louise was in the lodge, I did not know why she was there. If I knew that Arnold Armstrong had spent some time in the lodge the night before he was murdered, I was no nearer the solution of the crime. Who was the midnight intruder who had so alarmed Liddy and myself? Who had fallen down the clothes chute? Was Gertrude's lover a villain or a victim? Time was to answer all these things.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Louise.

The doctor from Englewood came very soon, and I went up to see the sick girl with him. Halsey had gone to supervise the fitting of the car with blankets and pillows, and Gertrude was opening and airing Louise's own rooms at the house. Her private sitting room, bedroom and dressing room were as they had been when we came. They occupied the end of the east wing, beyond the circular staircase, and we had not even opened them.

The girl herself was too ill to notice what was being done. When, with the help of the doctor, who was a fa-



Old Ladies' home and ruins their digestion by sending them ice cream and cake on every holiday. Beyond that, and her reputation at bridge, which is insufferably bad—she is the worst player at the bridge club—I know little of her. It was she who had taken charge of Arnold Armstrong's funeral, however, and I went at once to the telephone.

"Yes," I said, "this is Miss Innes."

"Miss Innes," she said volubly, "I have just received a very strange telegram from my cousin, Mrs. Armstrong. Her husband died yesterday in California and—wait, I will read you the message."

I knew what was coming, and I made up my mind at once. If Louise Armstrong had a good and sufficient reason for leaving her people and coming home, a reason, moreover, that kept her from going at once to Mrs. Ogden Fitzhugh, and brought her to the lodge at Sunnyside instead, it was not my intention to betray her. Louise herself must notify her people. I do not justify myself now, but remember, I was in a peculiar position toward the Armstrong family. I was connected most unpleasantly with a cold-blooded crime, and my niece and nephew were practically beggared, either directly or indirectly, through the head of the family.

Mrs. Fitzhugh had found the message.

"Paul died yesterday. Heart disease," she read. "Wire at once if Louise is with you. You see, Miss Innes, Louise must have started east, and Fanny is alarmed about her."

"Yes," I said.

"Louise is not here," Mrs. Fitzhugh went on, "and none of her friends—the few who are still in town—have seen her. I called you because Sunnyside was not rented when she went away, and Louise might have gone there."

"I am sorry, Mrs. Fitzhugh, but I cannot help you," I said, and was immediately filled with compunction. Suppose Louise grew worse? Who was I to play Providence in this case? The anxious mother certainly had a right to know that her daughter was in good hands. So I broke in on Mrs. Fitzhugh's voluble excuses for disturbing me.

"Mrs. Fitzhugh," I said. "I was going to let you think I knew nothing about Louise Armstrong, but I have changed my mind. Louise is here, with me." There was a clatter of ejaculations at the other end of the wire. "She is ill, and not able to be moved. Moreover, she is unable to see any one. I wish you would wire her mother that she is with me, and tell her not to worry. No, I do not know why she came east."

"But my dear Miss Innes!" Mrs. Fitzhugh began. I cut in ruthlessly. "I will send for you as soon as she can see you," I said. "No, she is not in a critical state now, but the doctor says she must have absolute quiet."

When I had hung up the receiver, I sat down to think. So Louise had fled from her people in California, and had come east alone! It occurred to me that Dr. Walker might be concerned in it, might possibly have bothered her with unwelcome attentions; but it seemed to me that Louise was hardly a girl to take refuge in flight under such circumstances. She had always been high-spirited, with the well-poised head and buoyant step of the outdoors girl. It must have been much more in keeping with Louise's character, as I knew it, to resent vigorously any unwelcome attentions from Dr. Walker. It was the suitor whom I should have expected to see in headlong flight, not the lady in the case.

The puzzle was no clearer at the end of the half hour. I picked up the morning papers, which were still full of the looting of the Traders' bank, the interest at fever height again, on account of Paul Armstrong's death. The bank examiners were working on the books, and said nothing for publication; John Bailey had been released on bond. The body of Paul Armstrong would arrive Sunday and would be buried from the Armstrong town house. There were rumors that the dead man's estate had been a comparatively small one. The last paragraph was the important one.

Walter P. Broadhurst of the Marine bank had produced 200 American Traction bonds, which had been placed as security with the Marine bank for a loan of \$169,999, made to Paul Armstrong, just before his California trip. The bonds were a part of the missing traction bonds from the Traders' bank! While this involved the late president of the wrecked bank, to my mind it by no means cleared its cashier.

### (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Why He Did Not Come.

"Why didn't you come, Bobby, when I first called to you?" asked a mother of her six-year-old son.

"Because you told me last week, mamma," replied Bobby shrewdly, "never to accept an invitation unless it was repeated. So many people invite you once out of politeness but really don't want you to come."

Metropolis of the Azores.

Ponta Delgada, with a population of 23,999, is the largest city in the Azores islands.

## ARE YOUR KIDNEYS WELL?

The kidney secretions tell if disease is lurking in the system. Too frequent or scanty urination, discolored urine, lack of control at night indicate that the kidneys are disordered. Doan's Kidney Pills cure sick kidneys.



S. E. Vaughan, 601 E. South St., Iola, Kan., says: "Diabetes had set in and I expected to live but a short time. Kidney secretions were milky white and back pains were terrible. I was so dizzy my wife had to lead me. After trying everything else, I began with Doan's Kidney Pills and was soon helped. Continued use cured me."

Remember the name—Doan's.

For sale by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

## OF COURSE.



The Friend—Your new patent medicine seems to have gained a great reputation for curing people. To what do you attribute its great curative powers?

The Boss—To extensive and judicious advertising.

## Tough Luck.

"I thought you said this was a young chicken," remarked Newed, as he sawed away at a portion of the bird.

"And I thought it was," rejoined his better half. "I looked in its mouth and it showed no indication of having cut a single tooth yet. The dealer must have imposed upon me."

"Did he tell you it was a young chicken?" queried her husband.

"No," replied Mrs. Newed. "But I'm sure he must have extracted its teeth before offering it for sale."

## His Pet.

Harker—Think I'll try to sell old Stuffer some pet dogs.

Barker—Useless job. All he thinks about is eating.

Harker—Hasn't any four-legged friends, eh?

Barker—Only one, and that's the dining room table.

## Not He.

"The fare in this hotel is fierce."

"But the scenery is sublime."

"The landlord doesn't deserve any credit for that."

Freedom is the only soil in which great and good men grow—freedom of mind and body.

## There Are Reasons

Why so many people have ready-at-hand a package of

## Post Toasties

The DISTINCTIVE FLAVOUR delights the palate.

The quick, easy serving right from the package—requiring only the addition of cream or good milk is an important consideration when breakfast must be ready "on time."

The sweet, crisp food is universally liked by children, and is a great help to Mothers who must give to the youngsters something wholesome that they relish.

The economical feature appeals to everyone—particularly those who wish to keep living expenses within a limit.

Post Toasties are especially pleasing served with fresh sliced peaches.

## "The Memory Lingers"

Postum Cereal Co., Ltd.  
Battle Creek, Mich.

## WORTH MOUNTAINS OF GOLD

### During Change of Life, says Mrs. Chas. Barclay

Grantville, Vt.—"I was passing through the Change of Life and suffered from nervousness and other annoying symptoms, and I can truly say that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has proved worth mountains of gold to me, as it restored my health and strength. I never forget to tell my friends what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me during this trying period. Complete restoration to health means so much to me that for the sake of other suffering women I am willing to make my trouble public so you may publish this letter."—MRS. CHAS. BARCLAY, R. F. D., Grantville, Vt.

No other medicine for woman's ills has received such wide-spread and unqualified endorsement. No other medicine we know of has such a record of cures of female ills as has Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

For more than 30 years it has been curing female complaints such as inflammation, ulceration, local weaknesses, fibroid tumors, irregularities, periodic pains, backache, indigestion and nervous prostration, and it is unequalled for carrying women safely through the period of change of life. It costs but little to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and, as Mrs. Barclay says, it is "worth mountains of gold" to suffering women.

## Hurry Ends in Indigestion

Use your teeth on your food or your stomach will suffer. Quick lunches, hurried eating, bolting food, are sure to end, sooner or later, in some form of indigestion, more or less troublesome.

## Beecham's Pills

quickly relieve the distress caused by hurried eating. They act directly on the stomach nerves and actually help the food to digest and assimilate. They are particularly good for nervous dyspepsia, bloating, hiccoughs, bitter taste in the mouth, and flatulence. With reasonable care in eating, Beecham's Pills will soon

## Put an End to Stomach Ills

Sold Everywhere. In boxes 10c. and 25c.

FREE Send postal for Free Package of PAXTINE. Better and more economical than liquid antiseptics FOR ALL TOILET USES.

PAXTINE TOILET ANTISEPTIC

Gives one a sweet breath; clean, white, germ-free teeth—antiseptically clean mouth and throat—purifies the breath after smoking—dispels all disagreeable perspiration and body odors—much appreciated by dainty women. A quick remedy for sore eyes and catarrh.

A little Paxtine powder dissolved in a glass of hot water makes a delightful antiseptic solution, possessing extraordinary cleansing, germicidal and healing power, and absolutely harmless. Try a Sample. 50c. a large box at druggists or by mail.

THE PAXTON TOILET CO., BOSTON, MASS.

## The difference remember this—

it may save your life. Cathartics, bird shot and cannon ball pills—tea spoon doses of cathartic medicines all depend on irritation of the bowels until they sweat enough to move. Cascares strengthen the bowel muscles so they creep and crawl naturally. This means a cure and only through Cascares can you get it quickly and naturally.

Cascares—10c. box—week's treatment. All druggists. Biggest seller in the world—million boxes a month.

## Farm Wanted--Special

I have been manufacturing very profitable standard goods, used extensively in homes, business stores, banks, factories, railroads, schools, farmhouses, barns, mines, etc., for 12 years, still increasing. Netted \$15,000 last year. Failing health compels me to lead a rural life. Will exchange for one or two good farms or half interest to good man for one good farm, at once. Describe fully your property with price. Address S. M. Booth, 230 W. Huron St., 5th Floor, Chicago

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