The fire frage to the second of the second

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

BYMARY ROBERTS RINEHART ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROYWALTERS

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. The aervants desert. Gertrude and Halsey arrive with Jack Baliey. The house was awakened by a revolver shot and Arnold Armstrong was found shot to death in the hali. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver on the lawn. He and Jack Balley had disappeared. Gertrude revealed that she was engaged to Jack Balley, with whom she talked in the billiard room shortly before the murder. Detective Jamieson accused Miss Innes of holding back evidence. He imprisoned an intruder in an empty room. The prisoner escaped. Gertrude was suspected because of an injured foot. Halsey reappears and says he and Balley were called away by a telegram. Cashier Bailey of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested for embezzlement. Paul Armstrong's death was announced. Halsey's fiancee, Louise Armstrong, told Halsey that while she still loved him, she was to marry another. It developed that Dr. Walker was the man. Louise was found at the bottom of the circular staircase. Recovering consciousness, she said something had brushed by her on the stairway and she fainted. Balley is the stairway and she fainted. Balley is a specied of Armstrong's murder feeling at night was found. A ladder out of place deepens the mystery.

CHAPTER XXIII-Continued

Apparently only a few minutes elapsed, during which my eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness. Then I noticed that the windows were reflecting a faint pinkish light; Liddy noticed it at the same time, and I heard her jump up. At that moment Sam's deep voice boomed from somewhere just below.

"Fire!" he yelled. "The stable's or

I could see him in the glare dancing up and down on the drive, and a moment later Halsey joined him. Alex was awake and running down the stairs, and in five minutes from the time the fire was discovered three of the maids were sitting on their trunks in the drive, although, excepting a few sparks, there was no fire nearer than 100 yards.

Gertrude seldom loses her presence of mind, and she ran to the telephone. But by the time the Casanova volunteer fire department came toiling up the hill the stable was a furnace, with the Dragon Fly safe but blistered, in the road. Some gasoline exploded just as the volunteer department got to work, which shook their nerves as well as the burning building. The stable, being on a hill, was a torch to attract the population from every direction

The stable was off the west wing. I hardly know how I came to think of the circular staircase and the un-guarded door at its foot. Liddy was putting my clothes into sheets, preparatory to tossing them out the window, when I found her, and I could hardly persuade her to stop.

"I want you to come with me, Liddy," I said. "Bring a candle and a couple of blankets."

She lagged behind considerably when she saw me making for the east wing, and at the top of the staircase she balked.

"I am not going down there," she

vinced I had hit on the explanation, up the stairs. and that perhaps it was already to that I heard stealthy footsteps on the again. shouting outside that it was impossible to tell. Liddy was on the point of retreat.

'Very well," I said, "then I shall go down alone. Run back to Mr. Halsey's and the search was in full blast. Don't remember—I shall be down And hurry."

the stairs, going very slowly, and one.

The truth of my story was shown.

The truth of my story was shown window and the overfistening with all my ears. Just at the foot of the stairs I stubbed my too against Haisey's big chair, and had to own the well-like and at that moment, with a second,

With a crash I had turned or, its legs against the stairs. 1

> t in front of her. o door, and she un-

ot to wait for any-



It Went Off, Right Through the Door.

with the candle, for it went out, and I was left in darkness.

I was really astonishingly cool. I remember stepping over the chair and gluing my ear to the door, and I shall doubt of it. never forget feeling it give an inch or two there in the darkness, under a steady pressure from without. But the chair held, although I could hear an ominous cracking of one of the legs. And then, without the slightest warning, the cardroom window broke with a crash. I had my finger on the trigger of the revolver, and as I jumped it went off, right through the door. Some one outside swore round-ly, and for the first time I could hear what was said.

"Only a scratch. Men are at the other end of the house. . . . Have the whole rat's nest on us." Have the whole rat's nest on us."
And a lot of profanity which I won't write down. The voices were at the broken window now, and although I was trembling violently, I was determined that I would hold them until help came. I moved up the stairs until I could see into the cardroom, or rather through it, to the window. As I looked a small man put his leg over. I looked a small man put his leg over the sill and stepped into the room. The curtain confused him for a moment; then he turned, not toward me, but toward the billiard room door. I fired again, and something that was glass or china crashed to the ground. Then I ran up the stairs and along the "There is no one guarding the door down there," I explained. "Who knows?—this may be a scheme to draw everybody away from this end of the house, and let some one in There was the sound of footsteps in There was corridor to the main staircase. Ger-

Berserk, I think. I had gone It seemed to me as I listened leaned over the stair-rail and fired old boy!" Halsey, below, yelled at me. "What are you doing up there?" he

yelled. "You missed me by an inch. And then I collapsed and fainted. When I came around Liddy was rubbing my temples with eau de quinine.

shoot down the stairs if you hear a burned to the ground, while the crowd cheered at every falling ratfer, and the volunteer fire department sprayed I put the candle on the floor at the top of the staircase and took off my house Alex and Halsey searched every

stand on one foot in a soundless agony got upstairs was almost impossible until the pain subsided to a dull ache. He had not used the main staircase, And then—I knew I was right. Some one had put a key into the lock, and in the east wing, and Liddy had been was turning it. For some reason it at the window, in the west wing refused to work, and the key was where the servants' stair went up. But There was a muttering of we did not go to bed at all. Sam Bovoices outside; I had only a second. hannon and Warner helped in the Another trial, and the door would search, and not a closet escaped search, and not a closet escaped The candle above made a faint scrutiny. Even the cellars were given staircase, a thorough overhauling, without result. The door in the east entry to spare, I thought of a plan. a hole through it where my bullet had The heavy oak chair almost filled gone. The hole slanted downward, a space between the newel post and and the bullet was embedded in the porch. Some reddish stains showed it

> "Somebody will walk lame," Halsey said, when he had marked the course one was storming. Then the doctor's of the bullet. "It's too low to have hit quiet tone, evidently not arguing sh and then she came down of the bullet. "It's too low to have hit with the revolver anything but a leg or foot.

in front of her. Prom that time on I watched every not time to listen to some he said, in a shaking person I met for a limp, and to this probably disputing his bill, day the man who halts in his walk is coughed. The voices ceased at once; an object of suspicion to me. But a door closed somewhere, and the doc-Casanova had no lame men; the near-tor entered from the hall of the house est approach to it was an old fellow. He looked sufficiently surprised at see who tended the safety gates at the ing me.
railroad, and he, I learned on inquiry.
Good afternoon, coctor," I said stamps, so philateliat.

She went up the stairs at that, two gone, and the large and expensive at a time. Evidently she collided stable at Sunnyside was a heap of smoking rafters and charred boards. Warner swore the fire was incendiary, and in view of the attempt to enter the house, there seemed to be no

CHAPTER XXIV.

Flinders.

If Halsey had only taken me fully into his confidence through the whole affair it would have been much sim-pler. If he had been altogether frank about Jack Bailey, and if the day after the fire he had told me what he suspected, there would have been no har-rowing period for all of us, with the boy in danger. But young people re-fuse to profit by the experience of their elders, and sometimes the elders are the ones to suffer.

I was much used up the day after the fire, and Gertrude insisted on my going out. The machine was temporarily out of commission, and the carriage horses had been sent to a farm for the summer. Gertrude finally got a trap from the Casanova liveryman, and we went out. Just as we turned from the drive into the road we passed a woman. She had put down a small valise, and stood inspecting the house and grounds minutely. I should hard-ly have noticed her had it not been for the fact that she had been horribly disfigured by smallpox.

"Ugh!" Gertrude said, when we had passed, "what a face! I shall dream

The instant I had said it I was control the lower hall, and some one bounded him from the Armstrongs when they purchased a couple of motors and cut n the stable. Nice Flinders—good

Flinders was certainly not a common name for a horse, and yet the youngster at Richfield had named his prancing, curly-haired little horse Flinders! It set me to thinking.

At my request Halsey had already sent word of the fire to the agent from whom me had secured the house. Also, he had called Mr. Jamieson by telephone, and somewhat guardedly had told him of the previous night's events. Mr. Jamieson promised to come out that night, and to bring another man with him. I did not consider it necessary to notify Mrs. Armstrong, in the village. No doubt she knew of the fire, and in view of my refusal to give up the house an interview would probably have been unasant enough. But as we passed Walker's white and green house pleasant enough. I thought of something.

'Stop here, Gertrude," I said. "I am going to get out."
"To see Louise?" she asked.

"No, I want to ask this young Walker

omething. She was curious, I knew, but I did walk to the house, where a brass sign went in. The reception room was empty, but from the consultation room beyond came the sound of two Press. voices, not very amicable

"It is an outrageous figure," som merely stating something. But I had



your patient. I wish merely to ask a

'Won't you sit down?' "It will not be necessary. Doetor, has any one come to you, either early

this morning or to-day, to have you treat a bullet wound?"

"Nothing so startling has happened to me," he said. "A bullet wound! Things must be lively at Sunnyside." "I didn't say it was at Sunnyside But as it happens, it was. If any such case comes to you, will it be too much

trouble for you to let me know?"
"I shall be only too happy," he said. "I understand you have had a fire up there, too. A fire and shooting in one night is rather lively for a quiet place like that."

"It is as quiet as a boiler-shop," I replied, as I turned to go.

"And you are still going to stay?" "Until I am burned out," I respond ed. And then, on my way down the steps, I turned around suddenly.

"Doctor," I asked at a venture,
"have you ever heard of a child
named Lucien Wallace?"

Clever as he was, his face changed
and stiffened. He was on his guard
again in a moment

again in a moment.

"Lucien Wallace?" he repeated.
"No, I think not. There are plenty of Wallaces around, but I don't know any Lucien." I was as certain as possible that

he did. People do not lie : eadily to me, and this man lied beyond a doubt. But there was nothing to be gained now: his defenses were up, and I left, half irritated and wholly baffled.

Our reception was entirely different at Dr. Stewart's. Taken into the bosom of the family at once, Flinders tied outside and nibbling the grass at the roadside, Gertrude and I drank some home-made elderberry wine and told briefly of the fire. Of the more serious part of the night's experience, of course, we said nothing. But when at last we had left the family on the porch and the good doctor was unty-ing our steed, I asked him the same question I had put to Dr. Walker.

"Shot!" he said. "Bless my soul, Why, what have you been doing up at the big house, Miss Innes?' "Some one tried to enter the hous

during the fire, and was shot and slightly injured," I said hastily. 'Please don't mention it; we wish to make as little of it as possible." There was one other possibility, and

we tried that. At Casanova station I saw the station master, and asked him if any trains left Casanova between one o'clock and daylight. There was none until 6 a.m. The next question required more diplomacy.

"Did you notice on the six o'clock train any person—any man—who limped a little?" I asked. "Please try to remember; we are trying to trace a man who was seen loitering around Sunnyside last night before the fire."

He was all attention in a moment. "I was up there myself at the fire," he said volubly. "I'm a member of the volunteer company. First big fire we've had since the summer house burned over to the club golf links. My wife was sayin' the other day, 'Dave, you might as well 'a' saved the money in that there helmet and shirt.' And here last night they came in handy. Rang that bell so hard I hadn't time scarcely to get 'em on."

"And-did you see a man who Gertrude put in, as he stopped for breath.

"Not at the train, ma'm," he said. "No such person got on here to-day But I'll tell you where I did see a man that limped. I didn't wait till the company left; there's a fast freight goes through at 4:45, and I had to get down to the station. I seen there wasn't much more to do anyhow at the fire—we'd got the flames under trol"—Gertrude looked at me -we'd got the flames under con smiled—"so I started down the hill. There was folk here and there goin" home, and along by the path to the Country club I seen two men. One was a short fellow. He was sitting on a big rock, his back to me, and he had something white in his hand, as if he was tying up his foot. After gone on a piece I looked back, and he -he was swearing something sicken-

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Marvels of Modern Surgery. Knife operations on the have given a death rate of from one to 20 per cent., against 20 to 40 per cent. ten years ago. Cutting open the upper abdomen, stomach open and turning it wrong not wait to explain. I went up the side out, searching for cancers and at the side announced the office, and operation, often followed by great went in. The reception room was cures and benefits, and is largely an

Philatelism His Hobby.

State Senator Ernest R. Ackerman of New Jersey, who is now enjoying his annual trip abroad, is one of the best known and most enthusiastic col lectors of postage stamps in this coun So large is his collection that he has set apart one room in his home in Plainfield as a stamp room, in which are some of the rarest of so dear to the heart of the

RHEUMATISM



I want every chronic rheumatic to throw away all medicines, all liniments, all plasters, and give MUNYON'S RHEUMATISM REMEDIVA trial. No matter what your feinds may say, no matter what your friends may say, no matter how prejudiced you may be against all advertised remedies, go at once to your drugglest and get a bottle of the HIEUMATISM IREMEDIV. If it fails to give satisfaction, I will refund your money.—Munyon Remember this remedy contains no salicylle acid, no optum cocaine, morphine or other harmful drugs. It is put up under the guarantee of the Pure Food and Drug Act.

For sale by all druggists. Price, 25c.

If afflicted with } Thompson's Eye Water

Completely Pauperized. Albert W. Hebbard. New York's charity expert, said at a recent din-

"The great danger of charity is its pauperizing effect. This effect must be avoided, or the recipients will all

become Jack Hanches. "Jack Hanch, on the score of bad health never worked, and the pastor of the Methodist church, a man whose heart sometimes outran his head, sent the idler and his family weekly gifts of food and clothing-supported the

whole crew, in fact.
"A church visitor, after listening to

Jack's complaints one day, said:
"'Yes, of course, you have had bad health, we know that; but one thing at least you ought to be thankful for, and that is our pastor's kindness in sending you all this bread and meat and jelly and blankets and so Don't you think it is good of him to look after you so well?"

"'Good of him?' said Jack, impa-

tiently. 'Why, what's he for?'

Fable of Pan of Biscuits. A Vassar girl married a Kansas

farmer. Two weeks later a cyclone made the happy pair a friendly call.

It cavorted around the premises, ripping up the fences, scattering the haystacks and playing horse with the barn, but when it looked through the open window it drew back in alarm. There lay the bride's first pan of

biscuits. "I ain't feelin' very strong this morning," murmured the cyclone And with another glance at the terrible pan it blew itself away.

Wrong Guess.

It was exhibition day at No. 3, and as the parents of Jack Grady, the dullest pupil, were listening hopefully, the teacher tried her best to help the boy. "How did Charles I. of England die?" she asked, assigning the easiest question on her list to Jack. As he looked at her, with no indication of a coming answer, the teacher put her hand up to her neck. Jack saw the movement and understood its meaning, as he thought. "Charles I. of England died of cholera," he announced briskly .-- Youth's Companion.

Deadlock.

"Who is that man who has been sitting behind the bar day after day?" inquired the stranger in Crimson Gulch.

"That's Stage Coach Charley. He's in a peculiar predicament. He went to town last week and got his teeth fixed. Then he came here, and, bein' broke, ran up a bill on the strength of his seven dollars' worth of gold fillin'. Charley won't submit to havin' the nuggets pried out an' the proprietor won't let him git away with the collateral, and there you are!

So They Say.

Stranger-I say, my lad, what is onsidered a good score on these links?

Caddie-Well, sir, most of the gents here tries to do it in as few strokes as they can, but it generally takes a few more. -- Scottish American.

WISE WORDS. A Physician on Food.

A physician, of Portland, Oregon has views about food. He says:

"I have always believed that the uty of the physician does not cease with treating the sick, but that we owe it to humanity to teach them how to protect their health, especially by hygienic and dietetic laws.

With such a feeling as to my duty I take great pleasure in saying to the public that in my own experience and also from personal observation I have found no food equal to Grape and that I find there is almost no limit to the great benefits this food will bring when used in all cases of sickness and convalescence.

"It is my experience that no physi cal condition forbids the use of Grape Nuts. To persons in health there is nothing so nourishing and acceptable to the stomach, especially at fast, to start the machinery of the hu

"In cases of indigestion I know that a complete breakfast can be Grape-Nuts and cream and I think it is not advisable to overload the stomac at the morning meal. I also know the great value of Grape-Nuts stomach is too weak to digest other

This is written after an experience of more than 20 years, treating all manner of chronic and acute diseases, and the letter is written voluntarily on my part without any request for it." Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

NATURAL ACT FOR MOTHER

Women Understand That Not Heroism but Simply Love Prompted Self Sacrifice.

A few days ago, in a somewhat squalid neighborhood, a house caught fire. The flames shot quickly through the litter on the floor and the untidy array of clothing on the walls. A woman talking with a neighbor ran sereaming to the house and without an instant's hesitation sprang through the smoking doorway into what afready seemed an inferno. A moment later she staggered out, her hands and face blackened and blistered and her clothing on fire. In her arms she bore her baby, safe from harm.

The afternoon papers came out with the story, printed under headhaes ex-tolling this mother's heroism. Men read it on street cars, and as their eves gleamed with the stirring of the spirit which leaps to greet noble deeds they said: "That woman dared to do what most men would be afraid to do." But the mothers who read it at home did not think that way. Perhaps the danger to the baby, the wrecking of the home and the burns the weman suffered brought moisture to their eyes, but to them the act was not one of heroism-it was simply what any natural mother, no matter how thmid, would do under the same execum-stances.—Cleveland Leader.

REST AND PEACE

Upon Distracted Households When Cuticura Enters.

Sleep for skin tortured babies and rest for tired, fretted mothers is sound in a hot bath with Cuticura Scap and a gentle anointing with Cuticura Ofntment. This treatment, in the majority of cases, affords immediate relief in the most distressing forms of itching, burning, scaly, and crusted humors, eczema, rashes, inflammations, irritations, and chafings, of infancy and childhood, permits rest and sleep to both parent and child, and points to a speedy cure, when other remedies Worn-out and worried parents will find this pure, sweet and economical treatment realizes their highest expectations, and may be applied to the youngest infants as well as children of all ages. The Cuticura Remedies are sold by druggists everywhere. Send to Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., sole proprietors, Boston, Mass., for their free 32-page Cuticura Book on the care and treatment of skin and scalp of infants, children and adults.

Was Getting Monotonous.

A handsome woman who had been so unfortunate as to find occasion to divorce not one but several husbands was returning from Nevada. cago she happened to meet her first husband, for whom, by the way, she always has entertained a real affec

"Upon my soul, if it isn't Charlie!" exclaimed the ex-wife, cordially shaking hands with the gentleman whose name she had formerly borne. "I'm awfully glad to see you, Charlie!" Then, after a wistful expression had come to and been banished from her countenance, she added:
"Old chap, I've often wondered

where you were and what you were doing. It was too bad we didn't get on better together. I hope your experience hasn't been as unpleasant as mine. I'm sick and tired of marrying strangers!"

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For children teething, softens the gums, reduces in-flammation, allays pain. cures wind colle. Zeen bottle.

Some politicians are too modest to face the nude truth.

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