

# THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

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### SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Arnold Armstrong was found shot to death in the hall. Gertrude and her fiancé, Jack Bailey, had conversed in the billiard room shortly before the murder. Detective Jamieson accused Miss Innes of holding back evidence. Cashier Bailey of Paul Armstrong's bank, defunct, was arrested for embezzlement. Paul Armstrong's death was announced. Halsey's fiancée, 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 unconscious at the bottom of the circular staircase. She said something had brushed by her in the dark on the stairway and she fainted. Bailey is suspected of Armstrong's murder. Thomas, the lodgekeeper, was found dead with a note in his pocket bearing the name "Lucien Wallace." A ladder found out of place deepens the mystery. The stables were burned, and in the dark Miss Innes shot an intruder. Halsey mysteriously disappeared. His auto was found wrecked by a freight train. It developed Halsey had an argument in the library with a woman before his disappearance. New cook disappears. Miss Innes learned Halsey was alive.

### CHAPTER XXVII.

**Who is Nina Carrington?**  
The four days, from Saturday to the following Tuesday, we lived, or existed, in a state of the most dreadful suspense. We ate only when Liddy brought in a tray, and then very little. The papers, of course, had got hold of the story, and we were besieged by newspaper men. From all over the country false clues came pouring in and raised hopes that crumbled again to nothing. Every morgue within 100 miles, every hospital, had been visited, without result.

The inaction was deadly. Liddy cried all day, and because she knew I objected to tears, sniffled audibly around the corner.

"For heaven's sake, smile!" I snapped at her. And her ghastly attempt at a grin, with her swollen nose and red eyes, made me hysterical. I laughed and cried together, and pretty soon, like the two old fools we were, we were sitting together weeping into the same handkerchief.

On Tuesday, then, I sent for the car and prepared to go out. As I waited at the porte-cochere I saw the undergardener, an inoffensive, gray-haired man, trimming borders near the house. The day detective was watching him, sitting on the carriage block. When he saw me, he got up.

"Miss Innes," he said, taking off his hat, "do you know where Alex, the gardener, is?"

"Why, no. Isn't he here?" I asked. "He has been gone since yesterday afternoon. Have you—employed him long?"

"Only a couple of weeks."  
"Is he efficient? A capable man?"  
"I hardly know," I said vaguely.

"The place looks all right, and I know very little about such things. I know much more about boxes of roses than bushes of them."

"This man," pointing to the assistant, "says Alex isn't a gardener. That he doesn't know anything about plants."

"That's very strange," I said, thinking hard. "Why, he came to me from the Brays, who are in Europe."

"Exactly." The detective smiled. "Every man who cuts grass isn't a gardener, Miss Innes, and just now it is our policy to believe every person around here a rascal until he proves to be the other thing."

Warner came up with the car then, and the conversation stopped. As he helped me in, however, the detective said something further.

"Not a word or sign to Alex, if he comes back," he said cautiously.

I went first to Dr. Walker's. I was tired of hearing about the bush, and I felt that the key to Halsey's disappearance was here at Casanova, in spite of Mr. Jamieson's theories.

The doctor was in. He came at once to the door of his consulting room, and there was no mask of cordiality in his manner.

"Please come in," he said curtly.

"I shall stay here, I think, doctor. I did not like his face or his manner; there was a subtle change in both. He had thrown off the air of friendliness, and I thought, too, that he looked anxious and haggard."

"Dr. Walker," I said, "I have come to you to ask some questions. I hope you will answer them. As you know, my nephew has not yet been found."

"So I understand," stiffer.

"I believe, if you would, you could help us, and that leads to one of my questions. Will you tell me what was the nature of the conversation you held with him the night he was attacked and carried off?"

"Attacked? Carried off?" he said, with pretended surprise. "Really, Miss Innes, don't you think you exaggerate? I understand it is not the first time Mr. Innes has—disappeared."

"You are quibbling, doctor. This is a matter of life and death. Will you answer my question?"

"Certainly. He said his nerves were bad, and I gave him a prescription for them. I am violating professional ethics when I tell you even as much as that."

"I could not tell him he lied. I think I looked it. But I hazarded a random guess."

"I thought perhaps," I said, watching him narrowly, "that it might be—Nina Carrington?"

"For a moment I thought he was go-

ing to strike me. He grew livid, and a small crooked blood-vessel in his temple swelled and throbbled curiously. Then he forced a short laugh.

"Who is Nina Carrington?" he asked. "I am about to discover that," I replied, and he was quiet at once. It was not difficult to divine that he feared Nina Carrington a good deal more than he did the devil. Our leaving-taking was brief; in fact, we merely stared at each other over the waiting room table, with its litter of year-old magazines. Then I turned and went out.

"To Richfield," I told Warner, and on the way I thought, and thought hard.

"Nina Carrington, Nina Carrington," the roar and rush of the wheels seemed to sing the words. "Nina Carrington, N. C." And I then knew, knew as surely as if I had seen the whole thing. There had been an N. C. on the suit case belonging to the woman with the pitted face. How simple it all seemed. Mattie Bliss had been Nina Carrington. It was she Warner had heard in the library. It was something she had told Halsey that had taken him frantically to Dr. Walker's office, and from there perhaps to his death. If we could find the woman, we might find what had become of Halsey.

We were almost at Richfield now, so I kept on. My mind was not on my errand there now. It was back with Halsey on that memorable night. What was it he had said to Louise, that had sent her up to Sunnyside, half wild with fear for him? I made up my mind, as the car drew up before the Tate cottage, that I would see Louise if I had to break into the house at night.

Almost exactly the same scene as before greeted my eyes at the cottage. Mrs. Tate, the baby-carriage in the path, the children at the swing—all were the same.

She came forward to meet me, and I noticed that some of the anxious lines had gone out of her face. She looked young, almost pretty.

"I am glad you have come back," she said. "I think I will have to be honest and give you back your money."

"Why?" I asked. "Has the mother come?"

"No, but some one came and paid the boy's board for a month. She talked to him for a long time, but when I asked him afterward he didn't know her name."

"A young woman?"

"Not very young. About 40, I suppose. She was small and fair-haired, just a little bit gray, and very sad. She was in deep mourning, and, I think, when she came, she expected to go at once. But the child, Lucien, interested her. She talked to him for a long time, and, indeed, she looked much happier when she left."

"You are sure this was not the real mother?"

"O mercy, no! Why, she didn't know which of the three was Lucien. I thought perhaps she was a friend of yours, but, of course, I didn't ask."

"She was not—pock-marked?" I asked at a venture.

"No, indeed. A skin like a baby's. But perhaps you will know the initials. She gave Lucien a handkerchief and forgot it. It was very fine, black-bordered, and it had three hand-worked letters in the corner—F. B. A."

"No," I said with truth enough, "she is not a friend of mine." F. B. A. was Fanny Armstrong, without a chance of doubt.

With another warning to Mrs. Tate as to silence, we started back to Sun-

nyside. So Fanny Armstrong knew of Lucien Wallace, and was sufficiently interested to visit him and pay for his support. Who was the child's mother and where was she? Who was Nina Carrington? Did either of them know where Halsey was, or what had happened to him?

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

#### A Tramp and the Toothache.

The bitterness toward the dead president of the Traders' bank seemed to grow with time. Never popular, his memory was execrated by people who had lost nothing, but who were filled with disgust by constantly hearing new stories of the man's grasping avarice.

But, like everything else those days, the bank failure was almost forgotten by Gertrude and myself. We did not mention Jack Bailey; I had found nothing to change my impression of his guilt, and Gertrude knew how I felt. As for the murder of the bank president's son, I was of two minds. One day I thought Gertrude knew or at least suspected that Jack had done it; the next I feared that it had been Gertrude herself, that night alone on the circular staircase. And then the mother of Lucien Wallace would obtrude herself, and an almost equally good case might be made against her. There were times, of course, when I was disposed to throw all those suspicions aside, and fix definitely on the unknown, whoever that might be.

I had my greatest disappointment when it came to tracing Nina Carrington. The woman had gone without leaving a trace. Marked as she was, it should have been easy to follow her, but she was not to be found. A description to one of the detectives, on my arrival at home, had started the ball rolling. But by night she had not been found. I told Gertrude, then, about the telegram to Louise when she had been ill before; about my visit to Dr. Walker, and my suspicions that Mattie Bliss and Nina Carrington were the same. She thought, as I did, that there was little doubt of it.

I said nothing to her, however, of the detective's suspicions about Alex. Little things that I had not noticed at the time now came back to me. I had an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps Alex was a spy, and that by taking him into the house I had played into the enemy's hands. But at eight o'clock that night Alex himself appeared, and with him a strange and repulsive individual. They made a queer pair, for Alex was almost as disreputable as the tramp, and he had a badly swollen eye.

Gertrude had been sitting listlessly waiting for the evening message from Mr. Jamieson, but when the singular pair came in, as they did, without ceremony, she jumped up and stood staring. Winters, the detective who watched the house at night, followed them, and kept his eyes sharply on Alex's prisoner. For that was the situation as it developed.

He was a tall lanky individual, ragged and dirty, and just now he looked both terrified and embarrassed. Alex was too much engrossed to be either, and to this day I don't think I ever asked him why he went off without permission the day before.

"Miss Innes," Alex began abruptly, "this man can tell us something very important about the disappearance of Mr. Innes. I found him trying to sell this watch."

He took a watch from his pocket and put it on the table. It was Halsey's watch. I had given it to him on the



twenty-first birthday; I was dumb with apprehension.

"He says he had a pair of cuff-links also, but he sold them—"

"For a dollar'n half," put in the disreputable individual hoarsely, with an eye on the detective.

"He is not—dead?" I implored. The tramp cleared his throat.

"No'm," he said huskily. "He was used up pretty bad, but he weren't dead. He was comin' to hisself when I—"

"He stopped and looked at the detective. "I didn't steal it, Mr. Winters," he whined. "I found it in the road, honest to God, I did."

Mr. Winters paid no attention to him. He was watching Alex.

"I'd better tell what he told me," Alex broke in. "It will be quicker. When Jamieson—when Mr. Jamieson calls up we can start him right. Mr. Winters, I found this man trying to sell that watch on Fifth street. He offered it to me for \$3."

"How did you know the watch?" Winters snapped at him.

"I had seen it before, many times. I used it at night when I was watching at the foot of the staircase." The detective was satisfied. "When he offered the watch to me, I knew it, and I pretended I was going to buy it. We went into an alley and I got the watch." The tramp shivered. It was plain how Alex had secured the watch.

"Then—I got the story from this fellow. He claims to have seen the whole affair. He says he was in an empty car—in the car the automobile struck."

The tramp broke in here and told his story, with frequent interpretations by Alex and Mr. Winters. He used a strange medley, in which familiar words took unfamiliar meanings, but it was gradually made clear to us.

On the night in question the tramp had been "pounding his car"—this struck me as being graphic—in an empty box-car along the siding at Casanova. The train was going west, and due to leave at dawn. The tramp and the "brakey" were friendly, and things going well. About ten o'clock, perhaps earlier, a terrific crash against the side of the car roused him. He tried to open the door, but could not move it. He got out of the other side, and just as he did so, he heard some one groan.

The habits of a lifetime made him cautious. He slipped on to the bumper of a car and peered through. An automobile had struck the car and stood there on two wheels. The tail lights were burning, but the headlights were out. Two men were stooping over some one who lay on the ground. The taller of two started on a dog-trot along the train looking for an empty. He found one four cars away and ran back again. The two lifted the unconscious man into the empty box-car, and getting in themselves, stayed for three or four minutes. When they came out, after closing the sliding door, they cut up over the railroad embankment toward the town. One, the short one, seemed to limp.

The tramp was wary. He waited for ten minutes or so. Some women came down a path to the road and inspected the automobile. When they had gone, he crawled into the box-car and closed the door again. Then he lighted a match. The figure of a man, unconscious, gagged, and with his hands tied, lay far at the end. The tramp lost no time; he went through his pockets, found a little money and the cuff-links, and took them. Then he loosened the gag—it had been cruelly tight—and went his way, again closing the door of the box-car. Outside on the road he found the watch. He got on the fast freight east, some time after, and rode into the city. He had sold the cuff-links, but on offering the watch to Alex he had been "copped."

The story, with its cold recital of villainy, was done. I hardly knew if I were more anxious, or less. That it was Halsey, there could be no doubt. How badly he was hurt, how far he had been carried, were the questions that demanded immediate answer. But it was the first real information we had had; my boy had not been murdered outright. But instead of vague rumors there was now the real fear that he might be lying in some strange hospital receiving the casual attention commonly given to the charity cases. Even this, had we known it, would have been paradise to the terrible truth. I wake yet and feel myself cold and trembling with the horror of Halsey's situation for three days after his disappearance.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### Labor That Aids the World.

It is true that all wealth comes from labor, but not necessarily from labor by the hands. The thinkers of the world have added instinctively to its development. It was a portrait painter who invented the telegraph, a college professor who produced the telephone, and the list might be extended almost indefinitely. It is well that today, with all our indulgence in rest and play, that we remember that it is indigently directed energy of whatever kind which makes our better and helps along the world's millennium dawn.



Alex Was Almost as Disreputable as the Tramp.

## The KITCHEN CABINET



A TART temper never mellow with age, and a sharp tongue is the only tool that grows keener with constant use. —Irving.

#### Ways of Using Stale Cake.

When the cake is in a loaf it is easy matter to steam it and make a good pudding sauce of eggs and sugar with a little milk and flavoring or a cooked sauce of half a cup of sugar, two tablespoonfuls of flour and the same of butter, half a cup of boiling water and two tablespoonfuls of vinegar. Cook until smooth and flavor with grated nutmeg.

All bits of cake may be worked over into the steamed brown bread, so that nothing need be wasted.

#### Sweet Fritters.

Take one and a half cupfuls of stale cake crumbs. Beat together one egg, one tablespoonful of sugar, one cup of flour sifted with a teaspoonful of baking powder; add enough milk to make a thin batter and stir in the crumbs. Bake on a hot griddle as pancakes and serve with syrup.

Another nice dessert with cake may be prepared by laying slices of cake in a serving dish, pour over fruit juice of any desired flavor and fill the dish with a custard. Serve cold.

#### Economical Pudding.

Beat three eggs, add a cup of sugar and three cups of milk and flavoring. Add two cups of cake crumbs and bake in a slow oven one hour. A little breakfast cereal left over or a little cooked rice may be added to this pudding, and a few raisins, though these are not necessary.

#### A Few Hints.

When buying a box of laundry soap, which is a good way to do, take it from the box and pile it in a dry place where the air can circulate through it. Dry soap spends much better than green.

Turn the scrub brush bristles down when drying and the moisture will drain out rather than soak into the wood.

Velvet ribbons may be freshened by steaming over a wet cloth placed over a hot iron.

Hem the dishcloths to save the lint which ragged edges make, and such cloths will be respected and better used.

A nice umbrella should be carefully dried before putting away, and never left rolled in its case for any length of time, as it is apt to crack in the folds.

## CHANGED HIS MIND.

LET there be many windows in your soul, your soul, your soul. May beauty fit. Not the narrow pane Of one poor creed can catch the radiant rays That shine from countless sources. Tear away the blinds of superstition. Let the light Pour through fair windows, broad as truth itself. And high as heaven. . . . Tune your ear To all the wordless music of the stars, And to the voice of nature; and your heart Shall turn to truth and goodness as the plant Turns to the sun. A thousand unseen hands Reach down to help you to their peace-crowned heights; And all the forces of the firmament Shall fortify your strength. Be not afraid To thrust aside half truths and grasp the whole.

#### The Chafing Dish.

To the woman with many servants the chafing dish is a pleasant amusement to the woman who has none it is a pleasant and practical change from the every day serving of things. Sunday night suppers are a delight, prepared from the chafing dish.

To make a success of the meal all the preparations should be carefully made before hand. The butter measured in a tablespoon and made into balls is then ready to use without measuring. The stock or milk may be measured and put into little pitchers. Have the salt, pepper and flour all in a group easy to find. If meat or fish is to be used let it be diced as it is to be served.

See that the lamp is filled and the utensils at hand before inviting out the guests. There are any number of dishes easy to serve from a chafing dish such as creamed eggs, poached, scrambled and omelets. Creamed sweetbreads, creamed mushrooms, oysters in a variety of ways, small birds, fish and chicken.

Good alcohol is expensive, but it does not burn away as fast as the wood alcohol and does not leave the burner covered with the sticky deposit that the wood alcohol does.

A nice way is to serve a cocktail of fruit or a salad while the guests are waiting as you prepare the main dishes. Give each one something to do to help make the time an enjoyable one. Many like to prepare the dishes in the kitchen and simply keep them hot in the chafing dish while serving, but this takes away the pleasure of seeing the dishes made before the eyes, which is enjoyed by everybody.

A chafing dish may be an elaborate and expensive affair or one very simple and just as useful.

Nellie Maxwell

## MADE HIS APOLOGY AMPLE

Irish Legislator Even Withdrew the Words That He Was About to Utter.

There is in congress a western representative of Celtic origin who has more than once "stirred up the animals" by his propensity to bait the opposition.

On one occasion he rose to denounce the statements made in a speech that had been delivered by a member of the other party. His impetuosity led him to phrase his remarks rather strongly.

"Order, order!" exclaimed the speaker, pounding with his gavel.

Again, in a minute or two, did the son of Erin return to his charge of willful misstatement. Again was he called to "order."

It was a critical moment. His colleagues, for motives of policy, did not wish him to be put out of the debate, so they hinted so by tugging vigorously at his coat tails.

Now, it's a very dangerous matter to trifle with the tails of an Irishman's coat, save in the cause of friendship. Nevertheless, the indignant yet good-natured member recognized the command of his party and sat down after delivering this Partisan dart:

"I obey the ruling of the House, and I beg to retract what I was about to observe!"

That one touch of Irish oratory took the whole House by storm.—Lippincott's.

## BABY WASTED TO SKELETON

"My little son, when about a year and a half old, began to have sores come out on his face. I had a physician treat him, but the sores grew worse. Then they began to come out on his arms, then on other parts of his body, and then one came on his chest, worse than the others. Then I called another physician. Still he grew worse. At the end of about a year and a half of suffering he grew so bad that I had to tie his hands in cloths at night to keep him from scratching the sores and tearing the flesh. He got to be a mere skeleton, and was hardly able to walk."

"My aunt advised me to try Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment. I sent to a drug store and got a cake of Cuticura Soap and a box of the Ointment and followed directions. At the end of two months the sores were all well. He has never had any sores of any kind since. I can sincerely say that only for Cuticura my child would have died. I used only one cake of Cuticura Soap and about three boxes of Ointment."

"I am a nurse and my profession brings me into many different families and it is always a pleasure for me to tell my story and recommend Cuticura Remedies. Mrs. Egbert Sheldon, Litchfield, Conn., Oct. 23, 1909."



Mrs. Ferndale—We haven't any eggs, but I can get some if you want them very bad!

Summerbord—Never mind, I don't care for that kind.

## DRINK WATER TO CURE KIDNEYS AND RHEUMATISM

The People Do Not Drink Enough Water to Keep Healthy. Says Well-Known Authority.

"The numerous cases of kidney and bladder diseases and rheumatism are mainly due to the fact that the drinking of water, nature's greatest medicine, has been neglected."

Stop loading your system with medicines and cure-alls; but get on the water wagon. If you are really sick, why, of course, take the proper medicines—plain, common vegetable treatment, which will not shatter the nerves or ruin the stomach."

To cure Rheumatism you must make the kidneys do their work; they are the filters of the blood. They must be made to strain out of the blood the waste matter and acids that cause rheumatism; the urine must be neutralized so it will no longer be a source of irritation to the bladder, and, most of all, you must keep these acids from forming in the stomach. This is the cause of stomach trouble and poor digestion. For these conditions you can do no better than take the following prescription: Fluid Extract Dandelion, one-half ounce; Compound Kargos, one ounce; Compound Syrup Sarsaparilla, three ounces. Mix by shaking well in bottle and take in teaspoonful doses after each meal and at bedtime, but don't forget the water. Drink plenty and often.

This valuable information and simple prescription should be posted up in each household and used at the first sign of an attack of rheumatism, headache or urinary trouble, no matter how slight.