The BLIND MAN'S EYES

BY

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CHAPTER XV—Continued.

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She halted suddenly in her dressing, perplexed and troubled. Her father had sent Eaton to the country club with Avery; there Avery, plainly, had forced Eaton into the polo game. By her father's instructions? Clearly there seemed to have been purpose in what had been done, and purpose which had not been confided to herself either by her father or Avery. For how could they have suspected Eaton would betray himself in the game unless they had also suspected that he had played polo before? To suspect that, they must at least have some theory as to who Eaton was. But her father had no such theory; he had been expending unavailingly, so far, every effort to ascertain Eaton's connections. So her thoughts led her only into deeper and greater perplexity, but with them came sudden—and unaccountable — resentment against Avery.

At seven Harriet went in to dinner with her father. The blind man was alone; he had been awaiting her, and they were served at once. All through the dinner she was nervous and moody; for she knew she was going to do something she had never done before: she was going to conceal something from her father. She told of Eaton's reception at the country club, and of his taking part in the polo practice and playing badly; but of her own impression that Eaton knew the game and her present conviction that Donald Avery had seen even more than that, she said nothing. She watched her father's face, but she could see there no consciousness that she was omitting anything in her account.

An hour later, when after reading aloud to him for a time, he dismissed her, she hesitated before going.

"You've seen Donald?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What did he tell you?"

"The same as you have told, though not quite so fully."

She was outside the door and in the hall before realization came to her that her father's reply could mean only that Donald, like herself, had concealed his discovery of Eaton's ability to play polo. Why Donald had not told, she could not imagine; the only conclusion she could reach was that Donald's silence in some way menaced Eaton; for—suddenly now—it came to her what this must mean to Eaton. All that he had been so careful to hide regarding himself and his connections must be, obtainable by Avery now, and Avery, for some purpose of his own, was withholding betrayal to make use of it as he might see fit.

She moved once more to return to her father; again she stopped; then, swiftly, she turned and went downstairs.

She looked hurriedly about for Avery. She did not find him, nor at first did she find Eaton either. She discovered him presently in the music room with Blatchford. Blatchford at once excused himself, tired evidently of his task of watching over Eaton.

Harriet caught herself together and controlled herself to her usual manner.

"What shall it be this evening, Mr. Eaton?" she asked. "Music, billiards?"

"Billiards, if you like," he responded.

They went up to the billiard room, and for an hour played steadily; but her mind was not upon the game—nor, she saw, was his. Finally, as they ended a game, he put his cue back in the rack and faced her.

"Miss Santoine," he said, "I want to ask a favor."

"What is it?"

"I want to go out—unaccompanied."

"Why?"

"I wish to speak to a friend who will be waiting for me."

"How do you know?"

"He got word to me at the country club today. Excuse me—I did not mean to inform on Mr. Avery; he was really most vigilant. I believe he only made one slip."

"He was not the only one observing you."

"I suppose not. In fact, I was certain of it. However, I received a message which was undoubtedly authentic and had not been overseen."

"But you were not able to make reply."

"I was able to receive all that was necessary."

She considered for a moment. "What do you want me to do?"

"Either because of my presence or because of what has happened—or perhaps normally—you have at least four men about the grounds, two of whom seem to be constantly on duty to observe anyone who may approach. I wish you to order them to let me pass and go to a place perhaps ten minutes' walk from here. If you do so, I will return at the latest within half an hour" (he glanced at his watch) "—to be definite, before a quarter of eleven."

"Why should I do this?"

He came close to her and faced her. "What do you think of me now, Miss Santoine?"

"Why—"

"You are certain now, are you not, that I had nothing to do with the attack on your father—that is, in any other connection than that the attack might be meant for me. I denied yesterday that the men in the automobile meant to run me down; you did not accept that denial. I may as well admit to you that I know perfectly well they meant to kill me. They are likely to try again to kill me."

"We recognize that too," she answered. "The men on watch about the house are warned to protect you as well as watch you."

"I appreciate that."

"But are they all you have to fear, Mr. Eaton?" She was thinking of Donald Avery.

He seemed to recognize what was in her mind; his eyes, as he gazed intently at her, clouded, then darkened still more with some succeeding thought. "No, not all."

"And it will aid you to—to protect yourself if you see your friend tonight?"

"Yes."

"But why should not one of Father's men be with you?"

"Unless I were alone, my friend would not appear."

"I see."

He moved away from her, then came back; the importance to him of what he was asking was very plain to her—he was shaking nervously with it. "Miss Santoine," he said intently, "you do not think badly of me now. I do not have to doubt that; I can see it; you have wanted me to see it. I ask you to trust me for a few minutes tonight. I cannot tell you whom I wish to see or why, except that the man comes to do me a service and to endanger no one—except those trying to injure me."

She herself was trembling with her desire to help him, but recollection of her father held her back; then swiftly there came to her the thought of Gabriel Warden; because Warden had

"It's All Right, Willis," She Said Quietly.

tried to help him—in some way and for some reason which she did not know—Warden had been killed. And feeling that in helping him there might be danger to herself, she suddenly and eagerly welcomed that danger, and made her decision.

"You'll promise, Mr. Eaton, not to try to—leave?"

"Yes."

"Let us go out," she said.

She led the way downstairs and, in the hall, picked up a cape; he threw it over her shoulders and brought his overcoat and cap. But in his absorption he forgot to put them on until, as they went out into the garden together, she reminded him; then he put on the cap. The night was clear and cool, and no one but themselves seemed to be about the house.

"Which way do you want to go?" she asked.

He turned toward the forested acres of the grounds which ran down to a ravine at the bottom of which a little stream trickled toward the lake. As they approached the side of this ravine, a man appeared and investigated them. He recognized the girl's figure and halted.

"It's all right, Willis," she said quietly.

"Yes, ma'am."

They passed the man and went down the path into the ravine and up the tiny valley. Eaton halted.

"You don't mind waiting here a few moments for me?"

"No," she said. "You will return here?"

"Yes," he said; and with that permission, he left her.

Both had spoken so that the man above could not have heard; and Harriet now noticed that, as her companion hurried ahead, he went almost noiselessly. She stood still, shivering a little now in the cold; and she listened, she no longer heard his footsteps. What she had done was done; then just as she was telling herself that it must be many moments before she would know whether he was coming back, she heard him returning; at some little distance, he spoke her name so as not to frighten her. She knew at once it was he, but a change in the tone surprised her. She stepped forward to meet him.

"You found your friend?"

"Yes."

"What did he tell you? I mean what is wrong that you did not expect?"

She heard his breath come fast.

"Nothing," he denied.

"No; you must tell me! Can't you trust me?"

"Trust you!" he cried. He turned to her and seized her hands. "You ask me to—trust you!"

"Yes; I've trusted you. Can't you believe as much in me?"

"Believe in you, Miss Santoine!" He crushed her fingers in his grasp. "Oh, my God, I wish I could!"

"You wish you could?" she echoed. The tone of it struck her like a blow, and she tore her hands away. "What do you mean by that?"

He made no reply but stood staring at her through the dark. "We must go back," he said queerly. "You're cold."

She did not answer but started back up the path to the house. He seemed to have caught himself together against some impulse that stirred him strongly. "The man out there who saw us? He will report to your father, Miss Santoine?" he asked unsteadily.

"Reports for Father are first made to me."

"I see." He did not ask her what she was going to do; if he was assuming that her permission to exceed his set limits bound her not to report to her father, she did not accept that assumption, though she would not report to the blind man tonight, for she knew he must now be asleep. But she felt that Eaton was no longer thinking of this. As they entered the house and he helped her lay off her cape, he suddenly faced her.

"We are in a strange relation to each other, Miss Santoine—stranger than you know," he said unevenly.

She waited for him to go on.

"When the time comes that you comprehend what our actual relation is, I—I want you to know that I understand that whatever you have done was done because you believed it might bring about the greater good. I—I have seen in you—in your father—only kindness, high honor, sympathy. If I did not know—"

She started, gazing at him, what he said had absolutely no meaning for her. "What is it that you know?" she demanded.

He did not reply; his hand went out to hers, seized it, crushed it, and he started away. As he went up the stairs—still, in his absorption, carrying cap and overcoat—she stood staring after him in perplexity.

CHAPTER XVI

The Fight in the Study.

Eaton dismissed the man who had been waiting in his rooms for him; he locked the door and carefully drew down all the window shades. Then he put his overcoat, folded as he had been carrying it under his arm, on the writing table in the center of the room, and from its folds and pockets took a "breast-drill" such as iron workers use in drilling steel, an automatic pistol with three clips of cartridges, an electric flashlight and a little bottle of nitroglycerin. He loaded the pistol and put it in his pocket; then he carefully inspected the other things.

He raised a shade and window, and sat in the dark. The night was cloudy and very dark. He gazed at the south wing of the house; the windows of the first floor were closed and the curtains drawn; but tonight there was no light in the room. Then in the dark he moved to the table where he had left his overcoat, and distributed in his pockets and within his clothing the articles he had brought; and now he felt again in the overcoat and brought out a short, strong bar of steel curved and flattened at one end—a "jimmy" for forcing the windows.

Eaton slipped off his shoes and went to his room door; he opened the door and found the hall dark and quiet. He stepped out, closing his door carefully behind him, and with great caution he descended the stairs. He went to a window in the drawing room which was set in a recess and so placed that it was not visible from other windows in the house. He opened this window and let himself down upon the lawn. He gained the south corner of the wing, unobserved or at least without sign that he had been seen, and went on around it.

He stopped at the first high French window on the south. As he tried to slip his jimmy under the bottom of the sash, the window, to his amazement, opened silently upon its hinges; it had not been locked. The heavy curtains within hung just in front of him; he put out his hand and parted them. Then he started back in astonishment and crouched close to the ground; inside the room was a man moving about, flashing an electric torch before him and then exploring an instant in darkness and flashing his torch again.

Eaton had not been at all prepared for this; now he knew suddenly that he ought to have been prepared for it. If the man within the room was not the one who had attacked him with the motor, he was closely allied with that man, and what he was after now was the same thing Eaton was after. He drew his pistol, and loosing the safety, he made it ready to fire; with his left hand, he clung to the short, heavy jimmy. He stepped into the great room through the curtains, and treading noiselessly in his stocking feet, he advanced upon the man, moving forward in each period of darkness between the flashes of the electric torch.

Now, at the further side of the room, another electric torch flashed out. There were at least two men in the room, working together—or rather, one was working, the other supervising; for Eaton heard now a steady, almost inaudible grinding noise as the second man worked. Eaton halted again and waited; if there were two, there might be others.

His pulses were beating faster and hotter, and he felt the blood rushing to his head and his hands growing cold with his excitement; but he was conscious of no fear. He crouched and crept forward noiselessly again. No other light appeared in the room, and there was no sound elsewhere from the darkness; but the man who supervised had moved closer to the other. The grinding noise had stopped; it was followed by a sharp click; the men, side by side, were bending over something; and the light of the man who had been working, for a fraction of a second shot into the face of the other. He muttered some short, hoarse imprecation, but before Eaton heard the voice, he had stopped as if struck, and his breath had gone from him.

His instant's glimpse of that face astounded, stunned, stupefied him. He could not have seen that man! The fact was impossible! He must have been mad; his mind must have become unreliable to let him even imagine it. Then came the sound of the voice—the voice of the man whose face he had seen! It was he! And, in place of the paralysis of the first instant, now a wild, savage throe of passion seized Eaton; his pulses leaped so it seemed they must burst his veins, and he gulped and choked. He had not filled in with insane fancy the features of the man whom he had seen; the voice witnessed too that the man in the dark by the wall was he whom Eaton—if he could have dreamed such a fact as now had been disclosed—would have circled the world to catch and destroy; yet now with the destruction of that man in his power—for he had but to aim and empty his automatic pistol at five paces—such destruction at this moment could not suffice; mere shooting that man would be petty, ineffectual. Eaton's fingers tightened on the handle of his pistol, but he held it now not as a weapon to fire but as a dull weight with which to strike. The grip of his left hand clamped onto the short steel bar, and with lips parted—breathing once, it seemed, for each heartbeat and yet choking, suffocating—he leaped forward.

At the same instant—so that he could not have been alarmed by Eaton's leap—the man who had been working moved his torch, and the light fell upon Eaton.

"Look out!" the man cried in alarm to his companion; with the word the torch vanished.

The man toward whom Eaton rushed did not have time to switch off his light; he dropped it instead; and as Eaton sprang for him, he crouched. Eaton, as he struck forward, found nothing; but below his knees, Eaton felt a man's powerful arms tackling him; as he struggled to free himself, a swift, savage lunge lifted him from his feet; he was thrown and hurled backward.

Eaton ducked his head forward and struggled to turn, as he went down, so that a shoulder and not his head or back would strike the floor first. He succeeded in this, though in his effort he dropped the jimmy. He clung with his right hand to the pistol, and as he struck the floor, the pistol shot off; the flash of flame spurted toward the ceiling. Instantly the grip below his knees was loosed; the man who had tackled him and hurled him back had recoiled in the darkness. Eaton got to his feet but crouched and crept about behind a table, aiming his pistol over it in the direction in which he supposed the other men must be. The sound of the shot had ceased to roar through the room; the gases from the powder only made the air heavier. The other two men in the room also waited, invisible and silent. The only light, in the great curtained room, came from the single electric torch lying on the floor. This lighted the legs of a chair, a corner of a desk and a circle of books in the cases on the wall. As Eaton's eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, he could see vague shapes of furniture. If a man moved, he might be made out; but if he stayed still, probably he would remain indistinguishable.

The other men seemed also to have recognized this; no one moved in the room, and there was complete silence.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Lady Was Right.

The lady who was thinking of buying an automobile had had the agent show her the carburetor, the differential, the transmission and everything she thought seemed important about the car. Then she said, "Now, are you sure you've shown me all the things I ought to know about?"

"Why, yes madam, I think so" replied the agent.

"Well then, where is the depreciation? I am told that is one of the most important things to know about when are you getting a car."—Youth's Companion.

Community Building

MUCH IN THE POINT OF VIEW

"Home Town" Will Not Look Alike to the Resident and the Visitor for a Day.

In the smoking compartment of a pullman not very long ago a gentleman told his fellow travelers a great many good things about his home town. Indeed, he told so many that one of his fellow travelers thought he would visit that town and, if he found it as represented, would move his business there. In due season the traveler did visit that town and on returning to his city office observed that the representative of the town whom he had met on the train "had drawn on his imagination tremendously." He may have and he may not have—it all depends on viewpoint.

To the resident it may have been an ideal town; to the stranger it may have lacked many things be regarded as essential. To the resident, substantial well-to-do people living in comfortable homes with plenty of breathing space about them, having gardens and shrubbery, with a community center building, and just enough industry to give opportunity for livelihood, it may have been desirable. On the other hand, its unpaved streets, lack of street cars, theaters, and so on, may have stamped the town to the city man as undesirable for home or business. The one lived there, perhaps all his life; while the other could only exist there without the excitements and pleasures to which he had been accustomed, though in the great city where he lived he did not know even his next door neighbor.

But beyond these things there may have been other reasons, and one of them may be this—the resident had helped make the town what it is; the other had no sentiment in the matter whatsoever, simply a cold calculated estimate. Men who create take pride in their creations. Good home-makers are generally good town-makers, because they want good homes in good towns. They have public spirit, civic pride, and loyalty, because when men work together for the common good they stick together for greater progress. Men in small towns know what they have accomplished; those who live in large cities have to guess at what they have done—too many find little opportunity to do anything, so engrossed are they with their own private business. There's a reason why the one has sentiment while the other has none.—Grit.

DOING AWAY WITH UGLINESS

Citizens of Kansas City Have the Right Idea in Influencing the Taste of the Public.

Speaking of city beautification, a coordinate subject with city improvements on a $100,000,000 scale, it is interesting to note that Kansas City has a "Citizens' Anti-Ugly Association." Its object is to keep the town spruced up. It calls attention to things that ought to be done to make Kansas City prettier and the things that ought not to be done that will make it less pretty than it is.

It is greatly interested in zoning and in lesser esthetic regulations such as those that affect billboards, weeds, tree pruning, and Topsy-like cheap architecture that "jest grows" without planning.

Its main influence at first is propagandist. Precept and preaching is the idea; but ordinances are also an aim.

There is much in persuading the public taste; and a single object lesson in beauty is worth a hundred sermons. In our own humble opinion, if you want an appreciation of beauty in city planning and building, show a bit of it accomplished—and there'll be a clamor for more.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Two Points to Remember.

If trees and shrubs are to be planted, they must be considered from two standpoints—the space they occupy on the ground, or plan; and their contour against the sky, or elevation. In this study artistic skill is called into play to create the best possible effects. The contour should be studied with a view to blotting out unpleasant views and allowing glimpses of pleasant ones, at the same time avoiding monotonous and poorly balanced effects. Shrubbery borders always have irregular outlines except where the shrubs are to be clipped to formal hedge effects; and the arrangement of these outlines requires careful study. The shrubs should be selected so that those in front reach the ground with their foliage, concealing the unsightly bare stems of more upright and taller varieties. And excellent effects may be obtained by grouping with respect to flowering season and winter appearance; and even with respect to the color of foliage, as great variation exists in the greens.

Pride in "Home Town."

It will always be a fact that a man's home town, the town that he has helped to make, to develop, and beautify, is to him all he thinks it is. To others to whom he may be describing it, he may seem to draw on his imagination; to the man who has no sentiment he may seem to be over-enthusiastic, but really he isn't. He has cause for satisfaction, for gratification, if his efforts to promote his home town have produced results that conduce to the contentment and happiness of all who live in it.

He Got the Answer.

"Ah," said the keeper of the candy store, "and what are you going to be when you grow up?"

"I'm going to keep a candy store," said the boy, "and every time a little boy like me comes in I'm going to give him four caramels for a cent instead of two for a cent."

Old habits in old people are still amenable to a bit and bridle, if they choose.

In trying to get his rights many a man goes at it the wrong way.