

THE SOLITARY HOUSE: A Mystery Story By E. R. PUNSHON

Copyright, 1919, by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright by the Public Ledger Company. THIS STARTS THE STORY

Keith Norton, tramp, makes himself at home in the Solitary House, and succeeding mysteries prompt him to remain there for some time. He has visitors: a girl, who is looking for her sister; and a clergyman, who calls him Mr. Westworth, giving him a clue to the owner, now mysteriously missing, of the place. Searching the house for somebody who choked him while he slept, he finds a case of jewels and hides them. He finds the girl unconscious in the woods. She had been attacked by some mysterious creature. He calls the doctor, and the girl is his sister. The girl doesn't know who she is; she has lost her memory; but she knows intuitively that Keith is not her brother. He confesses, and arrangements are made for lodgings for her in the village. When Keith returns to the house he finds it ablaze with light, with every door and window open.

graps, her hands shook visibly, her whole appearance was of terror and great fear. The man seated at the table either did not hear her entrance or would not heed it, for he did not look up when she entered, and once more, with his odd lifeless monotony of gesture, he poured out more of the whisky and drank it off and put down the empty glass. He still never glanced at the window, and she came slowly up to the table and leaned on it with both hands and looked at him. Keith was not sure but he thought she made an effort to speak, for she moistened her lips with her tongue once or twice. But apparently no sound came, and the man, though he must have been aware of her presence, did not look up. Twice more the man, in the same mechanical and monotonous way, as though he had set himself the completion of a dull and boring but necessary task, poured out and drank off more of the raw spirit while the woman remained leaning on the table with both hands and watching him from tragic eyes.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

HE REMAINED for some time in the shadow by the fringe of the wood, crouching down and watching and asking himself who it could be that had arrived during his absence. Nothing at least was clear, that the newcomers did not wish to keep their presence secret, for there was not a window where lights did not show brightly, and in the dark night on the dark hillside the place showed up like a beacon. But, in spite of all this illumination, there was no other sign of occupation, no sound of any sort, no figures showing at the lighted windows or passing in or out at the doors. Solitary and quiet the house shone against the surrounding darkness as before it had hidden in the night and seemed no less aloof, no less impenetrably secret.

Very slowly, very cautiously, Keith crept forward till he came to the ledge surrounding the garden. He knew where there was a gap in this hedge a little farther along, and he found it and crept through and lay in the shelter of the hedge on its inner side. From every window and from the open door the light poured out in beams that fell across the lawn and garden in long streams of bright illumination, but in between these rays the night still remained intense and black. For a few minutes Keith waited, but all was very quiet; no sound came from the house, no one appeared to move within it. It seemed as silent and deserted now in its glowing illumination as ever it had done before, and along the dark patches that lay between the rays coming from each window Keith made his way slowly up to it.

The first window he came to was that of the kitchen, and very cautiously he drew near and peeped through. All within appeared to him to be exactly as when he and Esme had departed, except for the fact that the lamp on the table was now alight and burning brightly. But nothing else seemed to have been touched; he remembered two knives lying on the table that he had put down that morning, and the plates and cups were still on the dresser as they had left them after washing up.

For a long time he waited there, watching and listening, and hearing and seeing nothing. He drew away at last and went round to the front and looked in at the drawing-room window. There, too, all was as it had been when they had gone, except that the tall lamp near the piano was lighted and burning brightly. Nothing in the room seemed to have been touched. The big arm chair stood where he had pushed it back on rising from it. Esme's music was still open on the piano. It was as though whoever had been there had been content to light the lamps and depart again, leaving them burning, and this seemed to Keith a strange and even terrifying thing.

He wondered whether to enter the house and examine it and extinguish these lamps that for no apparent reason flooded every room with their useless and haunting light. He almost decided to do so, and he went on a little and saw through the open door into the empty hall, where the big swinging lamp glowed brightly. He went on farther to the dining-room windows, and when he looked through them he saw that there was within, seated at the table, a tall handsome man of about his own size and age, with a glass in one hand and a bottle of whisky in the other, and drinking the raw spirit with a sort of sullen and desperate resolution.

The light from the lamp shone full upon him and showed his regular, well-formed features of almost feminine delicacy and beauty, his soft curly hair and drooping silken mustache, and his pale and desperate expression. He scarcely moved while Keith watched him; he never once looked up; but with his eyes fixed moodily on the table and his hands clasping bottle and glass he, like an automaton, went on setting, pouring out more spirit and drank it off and lapsed again instantly into his former condition of immobility.

Of all the strange sights that he had seen of late this seemed to Keith the strangest. Who could he be, having come to this remote and secret place, and having lighted every lamp in it so that it blazed afar like a beacon, now sat in the night as though day and seemed resolved in sullen despair to drink himself into insensibility? While Keith thus in the night without watched and wondered, and while within the lighted room the stranger with his dreadful and mechanic regularity poured whisky down his throat, there came audible all at once another sound; that of a soft and light tread in the hall without. The door handle turned and Keith drew back a little, afraid all at once, for there came rushing back into his mind a memory of how the woman nursing Esme had declared that the door had opened and the devil himself peeped in at her.

And it seemed to him that this approach of the solitary and silent stranger drinking in gloom and despair through the night was one a fiend might well wish to witness. But when the door had opened there came in, doubtfully and with hesitation, a very tall and lovely woman with a pale oval face showing features of classic regularity and a form of almost perfect grace. She was very dark, with magnificent masses of dark hair coiled about her head and dark, handsome eyes, and at present she seemed to great alarm and distress, for her feet were coming and going in great

Newcomers

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mean, who these two persons could be, and why they should be in such apparent terror and despair, for what reason they had illumined the house so brightly only, as it seemed that the man might drink himself into insensibility while the woman looked helplessly on. Keith could not imagine for the life of him.

Once the woman moved slightly and made what seemed a timid attempt to take away the bottle of whisky. But the man, without speaking, clenched his fist threateningly and gave her such a glare of rage that she drew back hastily and made no further effort to interfere. An arm-chair was near the house and she sat down in it and watched, while he drank again, monotonously as before, but, perhaps a little more quickly.

At last, without any warning or apparent change, he rolled off his chair, and fell on the floor under the table, totally intoxicated. The woman rose to her feet and stood with clasped hands looking down at him. The light from the lamp shone full upon her pale, exquisite features, and Keith saw that there was on them an expression of the utmost despair. He wondered whether he ought to make his presence known and offer help. But while he hesitated she moved suddenly and came to the window and, without noticing him where he stood in the shadow, drew the shutters to and barred and locked them. He moved away, and he heard her in succession close and lock the front door, bar the shutters of the other windows, and then he saw that she put out all the lights. One only remained, that in the bedroom above, for there a gleam still penetrated through a crack of the shutters.

To Keith the rapidity and completeness with which she made the house secure the moment that her companion had completed his task of intoxicating himself appeared as strange as her previous silence and immobility. He felt very tired, and a little cold, though the night was warm enough. He did not know in the least what to do, and he went and sat down under the ledge of

THOROUGHNESS Nature takes her revenge on the slished, we know. She is kind to all competent men. The way that a job should be done is that so you will not have to do it again. Our boys at the front had that notion in mind. When with courage they tackled the Hun. They did a fine job of a rough-tumble kind. And when it was done it was done.

GRIF ALEXANDER.



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the garden. It was late, long past midnight, but the gleam of the solitary lamp in the bedroom upstairs still remained, and he watched it for some time, wondering what the scene he had just witnessed could mean and thinking of the position of the woman alone in so remote a place with, for sole companionship, a man hopelessly drunk. He could not help asking himself what she knew of the mysteries and dangers that seemed to lurk about this place, and he wondered if she had been so solicitous and careful to make every door and window secure because she, too, was aware of the brooding and evil presence haunting the woods around.

And was she likely to be this night in such peril as, for instance, he had been when the had been awakened by the pressure of murderous fingers upon his throat? He wondered again whether to knock at the door and offer help, but he reflected that such an offer at such an hour from a total stranger would not be likely to appear very reassuring; and he had waited for a time and seen and heard nothing, and when at last the light in the window above disappeared, he made up his mind to go back to the wood and find some shelter there under the trees where he could rest for a few hours.

He went very slowly and cautiously, gliding like a shadow through the night and often pausing and dropping on his hands and knees to listen and near ground lest there should be any following or watching him. But so far as he could tell he was quite alone and no other living creature was anywhere near.

Satisfied that he had at last secured the advantage of concealment from whoever or whatever it was that had followed him so persistently before, he found for himself a comfortable and well-sheltered spot under some close-growing bushes. The branches and leaves overhead were so thick as to give a protection almost like that of a roof, and the mold beneath was soft to lie on and quite dry. The position, too, was favorable, for in front the ground was open and level, and it was not far

from the house whose dark mass he could faintly discern against the sky. He decided that first thing in the morning he would return there and see what he could find out, and he was on the very point of falling off to sleep when he heard a low voice calling him from a little distance.

"Keith," it said, "Keith," and then again with an accent of haste and pleading: "Keith! Keith! Keith!"

Immutability No Myth

The Principle of Right and Wrong Never Is Changed

Immutability is at last proved to be the myth it is; the ebb and flow of the so-called moral law is understood; things are now known to be stable only so long as men think of them as fixed.

THOROUGHNESS

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DOROTHY DARNIT—Perhaps They Won't Brag Now

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Dreamland Adventures

By DADDY

"CINDERELLA'S BALL" (In this week's story Peggy is invited by Cinderella to attend a ball, and she finds it a decidedly queer affair.)

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER PEGGY suddenly sat up very straight in her theatre chair. On the screen before her had flashed the title: "Cinderella's Ball"

Ever since her narrow escape from becoming Red Beard's wife, she had been eager to learn what had happened to her fellow captives. Perhaps this picture would tell her about one of them at least, the charming Cinderella who had fled from the Turk's castle in her magic coach.

Following the title there sprang into view a stately palace. The walls of the palace opened up, and there was Cinderella in her boudoir, busily writing notes.

One of these flickered on the screen: "Greetings to Red Riding Hood. Cinderella invites her to a grand ball this evening at the royal palace. There will be a jolly time, including dancing lessons by the Princess of Birdland."

Peggy gasped. She hadn't heard a thing about this ball, or about the dancing lessons. Yet she was Princess of Birdland, crowned long since by her loving bird subjects. Could he be that there was another Princess of Birdland—one of whom she had never heard? Or could it be that the birds had elected a ruler in her place? Or was it possible that she was to receive an invitation to Cinderella's ball?

As soon as the notes were written couriers darted off to deliver them. One went to Sleeping Beauty, one to Mrs. Blue Beard, one to Princess Beauty, one to Goldie Locks, and so on down a long list. The picture showed each fair heroine of Story-Book Land receiving her invitation and going into a transport of joy.

Finally all the notes were delivered except one. A lively young courier started away with this at a brisk pace and the picture showed him searching through the town. With a thrill of expectation Peggy saw him stop before her own home. He rang the bell, but no one was home and so the door remained shut fast. The courier promptly went to southern elms and a puff of smoke drifted through the keyhole. Inside he searched each room, but all in vain. Peggy grew feverishly anxious. If the invitation were for her, she was in danger of missing it.

"Here I am," she cried aloud, only to sink back in her seat in great amazement—she had forgotten she was in a theatre. But no one seemed to pay attention to her—that is, no one except the courier. He stopped short in his tracks, looked toward her and walked right out of the picture to hand her Cinderella's note.

"Dear Princess Peggy, come to my ball," said the note. "Don't bother to put on your party dress. My fairy godmother will fit you out with white clothes, so hurry along. Your loving friend Cinderella."

"Wish clothes—I wonder what they are?" thought Peggy. In an instant there she was in the picture and a queer little woman in a tinkly gown, as she snipped faster than before, said: "I'm Cinderella's godmother, and I know how to turn shabby rags into royal raiment, but I don't know how to transform pretty, new dresses. There, presto! See!" And Peggy looked down to see herself clad in a gorgeous ball costume.

The fairy godmother instantly vanished, but behind a white cloud stood a gallant young man garbed like a prince in silks and satins.

BRUNO DUKE, Solver of Business Problems

By HAROLD WHITEHEAD, Author of "The Business Career of Peter Flint," etc.

THE PROBLEM OF THE OUTSIDE COMPETITION

A Little Matter of Profit Percentage IN LOOKING back over what I have written about this problem I realize that the personal pronoun has been used freely. So as to prevent being accused of egotism, I hasten to say that Bruno Duke has been in close touch with me all along. In fact, I had run up to New York on two occasions to get the benefit of his ideas.

I respect and admire my chief too much to attribute to myself, even inadvertently, results for which he is really responsible. Now to resume: This is how I explained to Mr. Duke weather Jackson the method of figuring percentage expense on a special sale. "On looking over your sales records for the last few years, I find that wherever you have put on special sales your sales have been three times larger than normal. That is only a rough average, of course. Is that according to your belief, Mr. Jackson?"

He just nodded interestedly. "That means that during sales time you do three times as much business as in normal times, but with little more than normal expense, for you do not put on any more help and the only expense at all unusual is advertising." Again he nodded his head.

"Allowing ample for extra expense for advertising, delivery and supplies, we can assume that if in a normal sale for the women's wear department only you do three times as much business—three thousand dollars' worth of goods for, say \$300 expense."

Jackson looked a wee bit puzzled, so I added, "You have no more rent, rates, taxes, insurance, heat and light or salaries to pay during sales periods than at other periods, so that as your sales increase, the percentage of expense—based on the actual expenditures, you understand—must decrease. Is that so, Mr. Jackson?"

"That's so," he acknowledged. "Good—so we agree that during a sale we can expect to sell a thousand dollars' worth of goods for \$120, while under normal conditions it would cost \$300 to make such a sale."

"Bless my buttons!" he exclaimed. "I never figured that out before, but it's right, all right." "So, Mr. Jackson, your expense percentage during a sale is only 12 per cent against 30 per cent normally. And that means that the dollar cost \$20 could well be sold for \$25, and still show a trifling profit."

He could not believe it until he worked it out for himself, and even then he said, "On paper it's so, and I can't see how it can be otherwise; but it doesn't seem possible to me." I finally convinced him that it was so, and suggested that we sell the dresses for \$24.75. At that figure he would make at least \$1.75 clear profit, whereas the same quality dress under regular conditions gave him only \$1 net profit, as I explained previously.

At Bruno Duke's suggestion, Betterly, the advertising expert, spent a day in Perryton and prepared the copy of the Clarion advertisement.

Jackson seemed to be seized at the thought of having electrotypists made of the \$24.75 dresses to be offered at the sale, but he was game, and went ahead according to the sales plan.

"What about trailers?" Betterly asked. "Trailers!" queried Jackson. "We don't sell 'em—or what are they?"

write this letter. It seems to me that the best way to fall in to try your utmost to succeed. From this you will probably conclude that I am discouraged, and am discouraged, but very much discouraged.

Regarding city-made advertising for country stores, I heartily agree with your opinion. I have observed an experience of this kind in all stores I have seen. That the language of the city advertising is certainly the language of the dealer and that the language of the country store is the language of the customer is a fact which is usually admitted. The consequence is that the city-made advertising is usually not understood by the customer and is therefore wasted.

Your letter is so interesting that I am glad to publish it for the interest of readers.

You will oblige me very much if you would give me your advice on the following proposition: I have a manure store on the main road in a village ten miles up Sarana. I have a house in the village, and I have a house in a porch, of which I would like to make a little restaurant, of course, only to serve sandwiches, salads, ice cream, coffee and chocolate. The veranda is large and I have a beautiful view of the lake. I am looking for a man to manage the store and I am looking for a man to manage the restaurant.

Don't waste your time and other people's time by complaining of how badly you were treated at the other places where you worked. Of course, it is true employers are not going to waste their time in analyzing hard-luck stories just because occasionally one of them is true.

Instead of being disgusted with employers, try being disgusted with yourself. Think well of the people you worked for, and if you made a mistake in leaving any job, say frankly, "I made a mistake in leaving these people, but I did so because I thought I could get better myself. Still, I've learned my lesson, and I shan't make that mistake again."

THE DAILY NOVELETTE THE COMPROMISE By GLADYS P. ANDERSON

MRS. ADAMS was making preparations for the noon meal when Miss Emery, who had just arrived from the city, called. "This is a fine idea," she exclaimed, after Vivian had explained her visit. "There will be a grand time at the Emerys tonight, and very select too. Of course, they knew you and Vivian were musical."

"That evening, Virginia, in her pin silk muslin that belonged to her and her sister jointly, went timidly up the path leading to the Emery home, feeling very happy."

Miss Emery, in beautiful brocade silk, was passing through the hall when Virginia was shown in by the butler. "Which one is it?" she asked. "I'm sorry you both couldn't have come. Virginia was placed where she could do every one's play or song. Then she gave herself up to enjoyment. She watched Sergeant West eagerly. It was only in dreams that she had ever heard such tones.

She had unconsciously pressed her hands to her bosom, and as the notes of his clear baritone voice soared to the roof, Virginia felt her heart beating so fast that she felt as though she were being torn apart. "What you are not afraid this time are you?" "I'm afraid I am a bit timid, I say the girl, 'but since you ask me I will try.' He was sorry for her as she stood by the piano. Her face was very white and her lips almost stiff. "Have courage," said the singer. "You did so well before."



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