BREAKING POINT

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

"Dangerous Days," "E," "The Amazing Inter lude," and many other striking and successful novels.

Copyright, 1922, by George H. Doran Co. WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

WHO'S WHO IN THE Physician AVID LIVINGSTONE, chief physician Haverly, a small town, genial but bluff, shares a secret concerning identity of the peloved nephety with the stater, beloved by everybody in this stater, beloved by everybody in ther own the stater, beloved by everybody in lown to the stater, beloved by everybody in lown, and who is determined or there is a one, and who is determined over there is a one and who is determined one day to go back to Norada, his child-hood home, in order to bridge the gao, he is full of vitality and is boyish looking the is full of vitality and is boyish looking and active in suite of his thirty wears and professional correct LER, a wholesome girl, who loves him very sincerely.

Who loves him very sincerely, who, ten gers before, was mared up in a curious years before, was mared up in a curious storp. Her husband, Lucas, had been shot to death, as was generally believed, by a certain Jud Clark, a rich wong man about town. Clark had disappeared immediately, and it was believed he perished in a bils-gard.

sard GREGORY. Beverly's brother and PRED GREGORY researches line him up with BASKETT, a newspaperman, who suspects that Dick Livingstone is Jud Clark His dexire is to clear things up. WINA. Elizabeth's sister, an extravagant

LESLIE WARD. Elicabeth's brother-in-law. con parents, a rich youth whose so-tally select mother wishes him to marry Elizabeth, with whom he is smitten. KNOW damned well you won't,"

Dick said grimly. "Not before I'm through with you. You've chosen to interest yourself in me. I suppose you don't deny the imputation in that you don't deny the imputation it that I have a jetter. You'll grant that I have a right to know who and what you are, right to know who and what you are, it to theatre, of course.

Dick put down the glass.

"I'm ready, if you are,"

"Does the name of Clark recall any-

that."
"Donaldson," Dick repeated. "That was it. I couldn't remember her name. The woman in the cabin. Maggie. And Jack. Jack Donaldson."
He got up, and was apparently dizzy, for he caught at the table.
"Look here," Bassett said, "let me give you a drink. You look all in."
But Dick shook his head.
"No, thanks just the same. I'll ask you to be plain with me, Bassett. I am—I have become engaged to a

I am—I have become engaged to a pri, and—well, I want the story. That's all."

And, when Bassett only continued

to stare at him:
"I suppose I've begun wrong end first. I forgot about how it must seem to you. I dropped a block out of my life about ten years ago. Can't remember it. I'm not proud of it, but it's the fact. What I'm trying to do now is to fill in the gap. But I've get to, somehow. I owe it to the get!"

when Bassett could apparently find nothing to say he went on:

"You say I may be arrested if I go out on the street. And you rather more than intimate that a woman named Beverly Carlysle is mixed up in it somehow. I take it that I knew her."

knew her."

"Yes. You knew her," Bassett said slowly. At the intimation in his tone Dick surveyed him for a moment without speaking. His face, pale before, took on a grayish tinge.

"I wasn't—married to her?"

"No. You didn't marry her. See here. Clark, this is straight goods, is it? You're not trying to mut some.

here. Clark, this is straight goods, is it? You're not trying to put something over on me? Because if you won needn't. I'd about made up are, you need it. I'd about made up my mind to follow the story through for my own satisfaction, and then quit cold in it. When a man's pulled himself out of the mud as you have it's not my business to pull him down. But 1 don't want you to pull any bunk."

telling you the truth, Bassett. I have some fragmentary memories, places and people, but no names, and all of them, I imagine from my childhood. I pick up at a cabin in the mountains, with up at a cabin in the mountains, with mow around, and David Livingstone feeding me soup with a tin spoon." He tried to smile and failed. His face twitched. "I could stand it for myself," he said, "but I've tied another life to mine, like a cursed fool, and now you speak of a woman, and of arrest. Arrest! For what?"

"Suppose," Bassett said after a moment, "suppose you let that go just now, and tell me more about this—this now, and tell me more about this—this now, and tell me more about the this now, and tell me more about the time.

now, and tell me more about this—this gap. You're a medical man. You've probably gone into your own case pretty thoroughly. I'm accepting your statement, you see. As a matter of fact it must be true, or you wouldn't be here. But I've got to know what I'm doing before I lay my cards on the table. Make it simple, if you can. I don't know your medical jargon."

Dick did his best. The mind closed down now and then, mainly from a shock. No, there was no injury required. He didn't think he had had an injury. A mental shock would do it. if it were strong enough. And fear. if it were strong enough. And fear. It was generally fear. He had never considered himself braver than the other fellow, but no man liked to think that he

considered himself braver than the other fellow, but no man liked to think that he had a cowardly mind. Even if things hadn't broken as they did, he'd have come back before he went to the length of marriage, to find out what it was he had been afraid of. He paused then, to give Bassett a chance to tell him, but the reporter only said: "Go on, You put your cards on the table, and then I'll lay mine out."

Dick went on. He didn't blame Bassett. If there was something that was in his line of work, he understood. At the same time he wanted to save David anything unpleasant. (The word "unpleasant" startled Bassett, by its very inadequate.) He knew now that David had built up for him an identity that probably did not exist, but he wanted Bassett to know that there could never be doubt of David's high purpose and his essential fineness.

"Whatever I was before," he finished staply, "and I'll get that from you now, if I am any sort of a man at all it is his work."

it is his work."

He stood up and braced himself. It had been clear to Bassett for ten minutes that Dick was talking against time, against the period of revelation. He would have it, but he was mentally bracing himself against it.

"I think," he said, "I'll have that whisky now."

Bassett poured him a small drink, and took a turn about the room while he drank it. He was perplexed and apprehensive. Strange as the story was, he was convinced that he had heard the truth. He had now and then run across men who came back after a brief disappearance with a cock and bull story of forgetting who cheefed. disappearance with a cock and bull story of forgetting who they were, and be-cause nearly always these men had van-labed at the cock and bull story cause nearly always these men and vanished at the peak of some crisis they had always been open to suspicion. Perbaps, poor devils, they had been telling the truth after all. So the mind shut down, ch? Closed like a grave over the unbearable.

And a most of the state of the



the mud as you have it's not my business to pull him down

"Clark an away?"

"All right. About ten years ago, or a little less, a young chap called Judson Clark got into trouble fiere, and headed into the mountains in a blizzard. He was supposed to have frozen to death. But recently a woman named Donaldson made a confession on her deathbed. She said she had helped to nurse Clark in a mountain cabin, and that with the aid of some one unnamed he had got away."

"I tell you, you don't even know you are Clark."

"All right. If I'm not, they'll know."

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"All right. If I'm not going time the reporter sat by the side of the bed, was overcome with his own responsi-

shastly now. He got up slowly and neld to the back of nis chair. "Not murder?" he asked with stiff

you can stand. Remember, we don't way. even know you are Clark. All I said

with the aid of some one unnamed he had got away."

"Then I'm Clark. I remember her and the cabin."

There was a short silence following that admission. To Dick, it was filled with thought of Elizabeth, and her relation to what he was about to hear. Again he braced himself for what was coming.

"All right. If I'm not, they'll know. If I am—I tell you I'm not going through the rest of my life with a thing like this hanging over me. Maggie Donaldson was sane enough. Why, when I look back, I know our leaving the cabin was a flight. I'm not Henry Livingstone's son, because he never had a son. I can tell you what the Clark

Shortly after that Dick said he would go to his room. He was still pale, but his eyes looked bright and feverish, and Bassett went with him, uneasily con-"No," Bassett said quickly "Not at scious that something was not quite all. See here, you've had about all right. Dick spoke only once on the

> "My head aches like the mischief," he said, and his voice was dull and

take. I came out here pretty well convinced I'd found the solution to an old mystery, and for that matter I think I have. But there's a twist in it that isn't clear and until it is clear i'm not going to saddle you with an identity that may not belong to you. You are one of two men. One of them is Judson Clark, and I'll be honest with you; I'm pretty sure you're Clark. The other I don't know, but I have reason to believe that he spent part of his time with Henry Livingstone at Dry River."

"I'k went to the Livingstone ranch yesterday. I remember my early home. That was' it. Which one of its recognized?"

"The man died, of course?" he asked at last, without turning.

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"The was circumstantial evidence."

"And I ran away?"

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"And I ran away?"

"Beasett corrected."

He did not want Bassett to go with him, but Bassett went, nevertheless.

He did not want Bassett to go with him, but Bassett went, nevertheless.

Dick's statement that he meant to surrender himself had filled him with uneasiness. He determined, following him along the hall, to keep a close guard on him for the next few hours, but beyond that, just then, he did not try beyond that, just then, he all, to keep a close guard on him for the render himself had filled him with un- NOTICE! MOTHERS OF SCHOO essiness. He determined, following him CHILDREN AND BUSINESS GIRLS

trying to plan a course of action. He was overcome with his own responsibility and by the prospect of tragedy that threatened. That Livingstone was "There was a short silence following flike this hanging over me. Maggie flike this han



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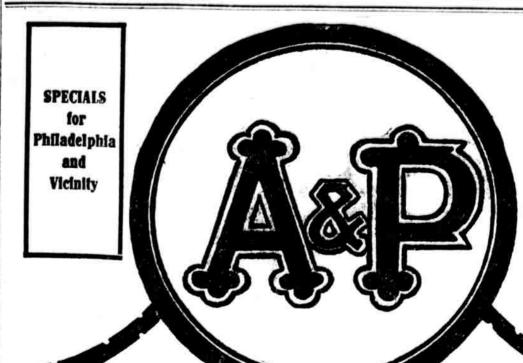
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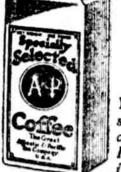
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