THE BREAKING POINT

By Mary Roberts Rinehart Author of "Dangerous Days," "K," "The Amazing Interlude," and many other successful novels. Copyright, 1922, Mary Roberts Rinehart. Published by arrangement with McClure's

the actress he used to care for.

"So she says." Bassett said easily. The valet jumped and stared.

Then you do not need me

still nlive, sir?"

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

PR. DAVID LIVINGSTONE, chast physician
is severile, a small town, genical but bins,
it shorts a secret concerning identity of
their believed nephete with

LICY Me sister, beloved by everyhody in
town,
PR. DICR LIVINGSTONE, in whose memery there is a gan, and who is determined
come day to ge back to Norada, his childbood home, in order to bridge the gap,
if it full of witality and is housh looking
and acting in spite of his thirty years and
professional carrer. He is in love with

LILLABETH WHEELER, a wholesome with
who loves him very sincerely

SEVERLY CARLYSLE, actress, who ten
sears before, was mixed us in a curious
story, the control of the control
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ARRISON MILLER, a neighbor, who knows something of the servet.

FRED GREGOUY. Beverly's brother and manager, whose researches line him us with

totth
Louis Bassett, a newspaperman, who
mannets that Dick Livingstone is Jud
Clark. His desire is to clear things up.
FINA. Eleabeth's sister, an extravagant
young usir. Dound wife,
LESLIE WARD Elizabeth's brother-in-law,
MR. AND MRS. WHEELER, tupica. American porents.
WALLIE SAYRE, a rich wouth whose socivilly select mother wishes him to harry
Elizabeth, with whom he is smitten.

Leslie's Confession

MYM GOING to tell you something. I know it's safe with you, and I nced some advice. I called on a woman this afternoon. You know who she is. Beverly Carlysle.

Joe whistled softty.

"That's not the joint," Leslie derellained, in a truculent voice. "I'm not defending myself. She's a friend: I vegot a right to call there if I want to "Sure you have," soothed Joe.

"Sure you have," soothed Joe.

"I should like to know, first, if I am talking to the police."

"No—and yes." Bassett said genially. "Come and sit down, man. What I mean is this. I am a friend of Judstee of the structure of the

Well, you know the situation at be a police matter. I don't know yet. up. Some new element he had to have, home, and who Livingstone actually is.

"You are a friend of Mr. Ciark's? if Gregory's story were to be disproved. The point is that, while that poor kid at Then the report was correct. He is some new and different motive. Suppose, for instance "Well, you know the situation home is sitting around killing herself with grief. Clark's gone back to her.

with grief, Clark and the second of the same second He sat still, mostly reviewing the saw elituation. His thoughts were a chaotic and unpleasant naxure of jealousy. fear of Nina, anxiety over Elizateth. end the sense of a lost romantic adverture. After a while he got up.

"She's a nice kid," he said. I'm
fond of her. And I don't know what
"She's a sense of a lost romantic adverture.

"M. She's a nice kid," he said. I'm

Suddenly Joe grinned. "She admits it, as the result of an "I see," he said. "And you can't needent. She also admits hiding the tell her, or the tamily, where you saw revolver where you found it

Not without raising the deuce of a

He began, automatically, to dress for dinner. Joe moved around the room, rang for a waiter, ordered orange jutes and ice, and produced a bottle of gin from his bag. Leslie did not hear him, nor the later preparation of the cockmann that the later preparation of the cockmann that the later preparation of the cockmann that the inquest them. Clark had run fact that a man who married built him self a wall against romance, which was puzzled.

The valet was puzzled.

It want you to think back, Melis, You saw her go down the stairs, some time before the shot. Later you were confident she had hidden the revolver, and you made a second search for it. Why: You had it unlocked and went in. Dick was asleen, and Bassett stood looking down it him with an odd sort of pater-way.

Why didn't you think Clark had run away. Why didn't you think Clark had done it?"

"Because I thought she was to them he got his revolver from a drawer and added it. Just twenty-four hours later he knocked at Dick's door in a boarding-house on West Ninth street, found it unlocked and went in. Dick was select, and Bassett stood looking down it him with an odd sort of pater-way.

Why didn't you think Clark had run away. Why didn't you think Clark had done it?"

"Because I thought she was puzzled.

"I want you to think back, Melis, You added it. Just twenty-four hours later he knocked at Dick's door in a boarding-house on West Ninth street. Gound it unlocked and went in. Dick was alseen, and Bassett stood looking down it him with an odd sort of pater-was also and added it. Just twenty-four hours later he knocked at Dick's door in a boarding-house on West Ninth street. Sound it was prevalved in and added it. Just twenty-four hours later he knocked at Dick's door in a boarding-house on West Ninth street. Clark had a down in a boarding-house on West Ninth street. The was released to the pater he wooked at Dick's door in a boarding-house on West Ninth street. compounded of his own new sense of responsibility, of family ties, and fear.

Joe brought him a cocktail.

"Drink it, old dear," he said. "And Bassett medical.

"Because I thought she was having an affair with another man. I have always thought she did it.

Bassett medical.

when it's down I'll rell you a few little things about playing around with ladies things. What inade you

things about playing around with ladies who have a past. Here's to forgetting 'em.'

Leslie took the glass.

"Right-o," he said.

He went home the following day, leaving Joe to finish the business in New York. His going rather resembled a flight. Tossing sleepless the night before, he had found what many a man had discovered before him, that his there was a han with her. They doin't hear me behind there was a han with her. They doin't hear me behind there was a han with her. before, he had found what many a many with her. They doin't hear me behind had discovered before him, that his them, and he was giving her a note for by of clandestine adventure was not some one in the house."

See strong as his caution. He had had "Why not for one of the servants?"

That's what I thought then, sit. It a shock. True, his affair with Beverly had been a formless thing, a matter of | _ imagination and a desire to assure his self that remance, for him, was not yet dead. True, too, that he had noth-ing to fear from Dick Livingstone. But the encounter had brought home to him the danger of this old-new game he was playing. He was running like a fright-ened chi'd.

ened chi'd.

He thought of various plans. One of them was to tell Ninn the truth, take his medicine of tears and coldness, and then go to Mr. Wheeler, One was to go to Mr. Wheeler, without Ninn, and make his humiliaring admission. But Walter Wheeler had his own rigid ideas, was uncompromising in rectifieds, and would understand as only a man could that, while so far he had been only mentally unfaithful, he had been actuated by att least subconscious desire.

His own awareness of that fact made him more cautious than he need have been, perhaps more self-conscious. And he genuinely cared for Elizabeth. Hat was, on the whole, a generous and hind-ly impulse that lay behind his ultimate resolution to tell her that her deser-

tion was both willful and cruel Yet, when the time came, he found it hard to tell her. He took her for n drive one evening soon after his return, forcibly driving off Wallie Sarre to do so, and evering sutrentitionally new and then her puls, rather set face. He found a quiet lane and stopped the car there, and then turned and faced her. "How're you been, little sister, while I've been wandering the gay white

I ve been wandering the gay white way?" he asked.

"I've been all right Leshe.

"Not quite all right. I think. Have you ever thought. Elizabeth, that no man on earth is worth what you've been going through?"

"I'm all right. I tell you." she said impatiently. "I'm not grioving any more. That's the truth. Les I know now that he doesn't latend to conseback, and I don't care. I never even think about him, now."

think about him, now.
"I see," he said. "Web, that's that.
But he had not counted on her inthition, and was startled to hear her

Well? Go on."
"What do you mean, go on?" You brought me out her to tell me

something.

"Not at all. I simply—"Where is he? You we seen him."
He tried to meet her eye, failed, toursed himself for a fool.
"He's alive and we!. Elizabeth. I was a full minute before she spoke again, and then her lips were stiff and her voice strained.
"Has he gone back to her? To the actress he used to care for?"
He hesitated, but he knew he would have to go ed.

have to go c.t.

'I'm going to tell you semething.
Elizabeth. It's not very creditable to
me, but I'll have to trust you. I den't

want to see you wasting your life. You've got plenty of courage and a 'o' You've got plenty of courage and a of of spirit. And you've got to forget him."

He told her, and then he took her home. He was a little frightened, for there was something not like her in the way she had taken it, a sort of immobility that might, he thought, cover heartbreak. But she smiled when she thanked him, and went very calmly into the house.

the house. That night she accepted Wallie

Bassett was having a visitor. He sat in his chair while that visitor ranged excitedly up and down the



"I think it was the same man, if that's what you mean. I knew something queer was going on, after that, and I watched her. She went out at night more than once. Then I told Donaldson there was somebody hanging round the place and he set a watch." "Fine. Now we'll go to the night Lucas was shot. Was the Thorwald woman there?"

"She had started home." "Leaving Mrs. Lucas packing

"Yes. I hadn't thought of that. The Thorwald woman heard the shot and came back. I remember that, because she fainted upstairs and I had to carry

her to a bed."
"I see. Now about the revolver." "I located it the first time I looked for it. Donaldson and the others had searched the billiard room. So I tried the big room. It was under a chair. I left it there, and concealed myself in the room. She, Mrs. Lucas, came down late that night and hunted for it. Then she hid it where I got it later." "I wish I knew, Melis, why you didn't bring those facts out at the in-

quest You must remember this, str. I had been with Mr. Clark for a long time. I knew the situation. And I thought that he had gone away that wish to throw suspicion from her to himself. I was not certain what to do. room, a short, stout man, well dressed and with a mixture of servility and importance. The valet's first words, as he stood inside the door, had been sig-I would have to'd it all in court, but it never came to trial."

Bassett was satisfied and fairly con-After the Frenchman's departure he sat for some time, making careful notes and studying them. Supposing the man Melis had seen to be Clifton Hines, n good many things would be cleared up. Some new element he had to have.

He got up and paced the floor back and totward, forward and back. There was just one possibility, and just one way of verifying it. He sat down and wrote out a long telegram and then got ble has and carried it at the statement. his hat and carried it to the telegraph office himself. He had made his last

In New York. Now Melis, The file a that you know something about crime Judson Clark was accused You intimated that at the inof lonely men the world over.

"Just one more trip, friend cow-hide," he said, "and then you and I ure going to settle down again to work, But it's some trip, old arm-breaker." He put in his pajamas and handker-hiefs, his clean socks and collars, and

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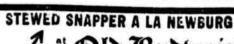
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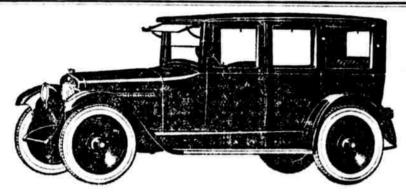
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