

A Secret OF THE HEART

By HOWARD FIELDING.

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SYNOPSIS.

Mr. Willard Davis is the head of the surface lines of New York and his office is in the rear of the company's rooms on the third floor of the Ann Street bank building. Associated with him are various schemes of absorption of small street car lines...

PART V.

A QUESTION OF TIME.

"This bit of paper was caught upon the weapon that pierced your uncle's heart," he said. "I have the weapon here."

The murderer was just escaping; my uncle was breathing his last. Then, by your measure of time, the assassin had remained with his victim nearly half an hour. Is that credible?"

He led me to the bowl beneath the glass, and called my attention to the fact that there was a small leak from the faucet. He asked me to observe the steadiness of it, and then attempt to place the faucet in such a position that there would be a different rate of leakage. I found that the thing could not be done. The faucet worked by a law of its own, and wherever placed it seemed to prefer.

"Just after the crime," said Johnson, "when you and I bend over this bowl looking for bloodstains, I noticed that the water in the bowl, afterwards I experimented and found that the time required for the bowl to be filled at that point was fifty-two minutes. Take twenty-five minutes off for the time between the discovery of the crime—coincident with your uncle's death—and my reaching the window, other-wise the paper would have been soaked. Just half an hour that your uncle lived!"

"He could not open the door and for a very good reason. Frozen and stifling, he had selected the wrong bunch of keys. I got the right one out of his pocket and the key of that door was on it."

"And that's the great point of this case. The door was locked—not with Mr. Davis' key, for otherwise it would not have been in his pocket. There is but one other, and that belongs to—"

"Stalbridge!" I exclaimed. "Correct, and beyond a doubt Stalbridge is the murderer."

"By heavens, Mack, you've lost him!" Johnson said. "Not on your life. I shadowed him to this room."

"He did not come in. The man has escaped. He got onto you and took the alarm. Mack, the shadow, struck his forehead with his right hand."

"He has been here," returned Johnson, "by heavens, Mack you've lost him. Not on your life. I shadowed him to this room."

"He did not come in. The man has escaped. He got onto you and took the alarm. Mack, the shadow, struck his forehead with his right hand."



ON THE WALL BESIDE THE DOOR SOME WORDS WERE SCRRAWLED.

we were not long in finding evidence of his presence. On the wall beside the door some words were scrawled in pencil. They had evidently been written while the murderer stood there listening.

"Thank you for these disclosures, Mr. Johnson. Your views are surprisingly accurate. I would like to remain and point out some of your errors in your presses, and certain considerations urge my immediate departure. I fear we shall not meet again, as it is improbable that I shall ever return to New York."

"These words had caught Johnson's eye on his first glance around the little room. He read them aloud, meanwhile had hastened to open the door. 'The infernal rascal has got away.'"

"He had fallen in the bottom of the shaft, mortally hurt."

"The fall had been heard, though not by us. Before we could get down the stairs he had been taken out of the shaft. He lived about an hour, and was conscious most of the time."

"When Norman had gone Stalbridge entered, and there was a bitter, angry discussion, which ended in my uncle's touching a match to the railway contract. As it blazed up, so Stalbridge's anger blazed. The fatal blow was dealt speedily. All else the reader knows."

"My uncle's cold or more precisely with Johnson's theory. Willard Davis had yielded to Norman's plea for fatherly treatment in the railway transaction. Stalbridge, in the back room, had heard all."

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