

OVERNIGHT GUEST

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

THE STORY THUS FAR: Adam Bruce, FBI operator, Inspector Tope and Mrs. Tope met in the Maine woods. Tope found a man murdered, who was at first identified as Ledforge, head of New England utilities. When a car believed to have been used in the murder was raised from the quarries it was found to contain the body of a murdered woman, Mrs. Kell. Her husband committed suicide. Joe Dane, assistant D.A., accusing Tope of bungling the case, took complete charge. Eberly met Ledforge to go on a fishing trip. When they got in the canoe, Ledforge upset the canoe. He knew that Eberly could not swim. When he saw that Eberly was not sinking he started toward him but was stopped by Tope.

CHAPTER XIV

Eberly said steadily: "He overturned the canoe, swam away. Then he looked back, expecting to see me drowning. He knew I couldn't swim. But when he saw me still afloat—Mr. Tope had made me wear a life-preserver—he started back to finish me!"

Ledforge, a bitter hurt in his tone, cried: "Nonsense! I came to help you, Carl!"

"There was murder in his eyes," Eberly insisted, not speaking directly to the other man at all. Ledforge whirled toward Tope, furiously. "You put this idea into his head! Of course he's shocked, doesn't know what he's saying!"

"He had a blackjack on a thong on his wrist," said Eberly.

Ledforge wore a strap watch on his left wrist. He held it up. "Carl must have seen this," he insisted; and he said sympathetically: "Gentlemen, Mr. Eberly is hysterical. He has always been afraid of the water."

Tope, after a moment, spoke. "Well, you see, Mr. Ledforge," he explained, almost apologetically, "there's more to it than just this. The whole thing started with a man that left New York last Friday morning with Mr. Holdom, in Holdom's car, and with Holdom's chauffeur driving. And the next time anybody saw that man, he was dead under a bed in one of the cabins at a roadside camp up here."

The others—save young Adam Bruce—were watching Tope. Adam watched Ledforge. He saw the man's pupils faintly dilate, saw his eyes become fixed in a concentrated attention. Tope paused, and in the instant of silence, Adam heard Mr. Eberly's teeth chattering together. And he had an impression of racing thoughts behind Ledforge's outward calm. Then the man asked curtly:

"What of it? What has that to do with me?"

"Why, Miss Ledforge hasn't seen him yet," Tope explained. "But—the dead man looked mightily like you."

Ledforge cried, in quick horror: "Looked like me? Dead? Heavens, man, do you mean Christopher?"

"Why, yes, dead," Tope assented mildly. "I didn't know his name was Christopher, but he looked enough like you to be your twin."

Ledforge nodded gravely. "Gentlemen," he said then, "we can't stand here. Carl is freezing, and I'm cold myself. Suppose we go down to the house. I must hear the whole story."

Tope asked: "You know who the dead man was, then?"

"Certainly," Ledforge assented. His eyes clouded with grief. "You said he looked like my twin brother. Well, gentlemen, he was."

At the house, Whitlock and Beal by Tope's direction stayed outside. Eberly disappeared with a serving man, to drink hot grog and find dry clothes. Ledforge asked for Miss Ledforge; and the servant reported:

"She had a turn, sir, and is lying down. Two ladies are with her."

"Good," said Ledforge. "Don't disturb her."

Tope suggested: "You'll want to get dry, yourself!"

But Ledforge negated this. "There's a good fire on the hearth," he pointed out. "I'll be all right. Come in!"

So they gathered in the big living-room, richly paneled like a baronial hall; and Ledforge said: "Now then: My brother dead, and some one else too, you said?"

"Mrs. Kell," Tope told him.

But Joe Dane could no longer endure that Tope should dominate the scene.

"And Kell too, Tope!" he cried. "Dead as a herring! And Holdom dying, so we'll never get a word out of him."

Tope saw Ledforge's eyes quicken in a sort of triumph, and the old man turned to Joe almost roughly. "Joe," he said, "you've a real gift for talking out of turn. Mr. Ledforge, here, can lie all he wants to now, knowing Kell and Holdom can't contradict him."

Cumberland and Adam were silent, strictly listening; even Joe did not for a while interrupt again. And Ledforge spoke, a little sadly.

"It's hard to speak openly about it," he confessed. "We've kept it an absolute secret for so long that silence is a habit now."

And he said earnestly: "But you know, every important man needs a double. Did that ever occur to you? Imagine now much easier it would be for the President, for instance, if he were twins. With one twin to attend to the business of the office, the other to handle the social side,

attend banquets, make speeches, display himself."

He continued: "But it was more chance than anything else that led us into it. Some years ago the heavy demands upon my time and my energy began to weary me. I had something like a nervous collapse, and I went away quietly to my boyhood home—a remote little town in Manitoba—for a vacation.

"Christopher lived there. He was a doctor—surgeon and doctor, too, as small town practitioners must be; and he took me in hand, cured me. But he reproached me for overworking; and he suggested that a man as busy as I ought to have a personal physician to watch over his health. I persuaded him to come back with me in that capacity. He suggested also that I ought to have a social secretary or an assistant, to whom I might delegate some less important activities; and the fact, which we discovered before we left home, that not even our intimate friends would distinguish one of us from the other, led naturally to the arrangement which has continued till now."

He looked from one to another. "It was very simple," he said, "once

I can make a guess. Let me think a minute."

Tope nodded, and waited, and calmly filled and lighted his straight black pipe; at last Ledforge lifted his head. "It's part guess and part certainty," he confessed. "But I think I see the answer."

The fire had burned low. "I'll take off this wet coat," he remarked, and stood before them in flannel shirt, vest, khaki trousers and light woods shoes with rubber soles; a spare, gray, small old man.

"It was Holdom," he began then. "I can see what was in his mind, what he tried to do."

And he explained: "A week ago, I would have been as mystified as you, because I had always trusted Holdom. But I know now that he was a thief and a rascal. I learned last Monday that he had been using my collateral to trade in an account under my name, to sell my own stocks short. I have already reported the matter to the Exchange authorities."

He paused, but no one spoke. So he went on:

"Holdom did not know, you understand, that there were two of us; Christopher and I.

"Now gentlemen, Christopher was sick. Being a doctor, he of course knew that he had a bad appendix; but he was devoted to me. For him to go to a New York hospital would have been to risk the discovery of our duality. He was willing to take some risk to avoid that, so he decided to come up to Holdom's home here for the operation. Mrs. Kell had been a trained nurse. Dr. Nason would come from Boston to do the operation, in the rooms above Holdom's garage."

"Christopher himself, pretending to be me, made all these arrangements with Holdom; so Holdom would naturally suppose that I was about to be incapacitated for a week or ten days. Perhaps he thought I was likely to die. Perhaps he already intended my death. At any rate, before leaving New York—and trading in my name—he sold my stocks short."

He hesitated, then continued: "So they left New York on Friday morning, Christopher and Holdom, and Kell driving. I protested, but Christopher assured me the drive would do him no harm. Before starting, he took a sedative in order to sleep, to escape the pain."

Tope prompted him. "And you say you can figure what happened?"

"I can guess," Ledforge agreed. "When Christopher fell asleep in the car—Kell was Holdom's man, of course—they laid Christopher on the floor, and Holdom too got down out of sight, so no one saw them as Kell drove past the house to the garage."

"Holdom was completely unscrupulous. He dressed Christopher in that old gray sweater and overalls, gagged him, swaddled his hands and feet and head in pieces of the dog blanket so that he could make no noise, and stuffed him into the rumble of the coupe."

"He sent Kell away with orders to meet him later at some agreed spot; then Holdom put on a pair of Kell's shoes. Their prints would be easily recognized because of the heel-plates. He knew that when Christopher's body was identified as me, Vade—because of his threatening letters to me, and because he lived there at the Mill—would be at first suspected; but if Vade were exonerated and Kell's footprints found, then Kell would be the next suspect."

"So then Holdom and Mrs. Kell—she was his mistress—drove to Dewain's Mill, in the coupe, with Christopher hidden in the rumble." He looked at them all, challengingly. "Doesn't that fit the facts?" he demanded.

"Well, so far," Tope agreed. "But—go on!"

"They took a cabin for the night, and Holdom hid Christopher where you found him. But Mrs. Kell must have protested at the inhumanity of leaving him there alive, till Holdom, in rage or desperation, strangled her!"

He hesitated, and the color for an instant left his cheeks as though that word had shocked and frightened him. "It's sickening!" he exclaimed then, hurriedly. "But—after that, Holdom would go on to dispose of the car, and of Mrs. Kell's body, and meet Kell, and make Kell give him a rap on the head and leave him to be found beside the road. As an alibi!" And he said in a low furious tone: "It is incredible; and yet something like that must be the truth!"

He finished, and Joe Dane started to speak, but Adam touched his arm and hushed him.

Tope rapped his pipe on his heel, chuckled the ashes on the hearth. "We showed Kell the dead man," he remarked. "He said it wasn't you!"

"Kell would lie, of course. To save himself."

"Yes, I figured that," Tope assented; but he said then in a sort of irritation: "Shucks, Mr. Ledforge, all that's too complicated for me. Holdom was in it, sure; but my idea has been, right along, that whatever Holdom did, he did because you told him to."

"It's Ledforge I tell Holdom—"

"Why should I tell Holdom—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Ledforge made an explosive gesture. "Hideous!" he cried. "Incredible!"

"Pretty bad," Tope assented; he added implacably: "And my notion is that you did it, Ledforge."

Ledforge shook his head abstractedly. He seemed not to resent this accusation. "Wait a minute, please," he said. "Of course, I know nothing of what happened up here; but

attend banquets, make speeches, display himself."

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IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for March 3

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A PEOPLE FINDING A HOMELAND

LESSON TEXT: Joshua 1:1-4; 23:1-11. MEMORY SELECTION: Thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.—Deuteronomy 8:10.

God is the Lord of nations as well as of homes, and he is concerned that those who honor him in their homes have opportunity to serve him in their national life. This was true in a special way with Israel, but it is also true of us today.

Ready to enter the Promised Land, the people had to part with their great leader, Moses, who was not permitted to enter. The time comes when even the mightiest of men fall, but life must go on and new leadership must be found.

I. The Changed Leader (Josh. 1: 1-4).

1. Workers Die—God's Work Goes On (vv. 1, 2).

God buries his workmen at the end of their day of labor, but God's work goes on. The people had become attached to Moses and had learned to trust his leadership, even though they often murmured. With his death we might have assumed that there would be a letdown, but that was not in God's plan.

The Lord works through men. He gives them abilities and uses them for his glory, often in a way which astonishes them and others. But let them not become proud, for God has someone to take their place when they are gone. They are not indispensable.

2. The Need Is the Same, So Is the Blessing (vv. 3, 4).

The promise given to Moses was still good. God's promises are always good. They are the only really stable thing in a trembling universe. The question is, Are we ready to take him at his word?

They were to step out by faith. The land was promised to them only as the sole of their foot should tread upon it. Israel never took out the full promise of verse 4. They lacked faith.

God honors those who believe him and who move forward by faith to plant the foot of spiritual conquest in new territory. Some are doing it now. Are we?

The enemies of God's people were many and mighty, but they were not able to stand in the way of God's people when they were moving forward for him. Here again, Israel failed. They did not drive them out, because they did not take God at his word. The application of that truth to us is obvious.

II. The Unchanging God (Josh. 23: 1-11).

Between our first scripture and this selection will be found the history of the conquest of the land (at least, of the larger part of it), and the division of the territory between the tribes.

Years have passed quickly, and the new leader, Joshua, is now an old man, soon to go to his reward. He gathers the elders who represented the people and gave them good counsel for the days ahead, even as he recalls the blessings of the past.

1. God Did Help (vv. 1-3).

Israel had been in many hard battles. They had gone through the trials of pioneer days in a new and unfamiliar land. Now they were established and at peace. Perhaps they were recalling their mighty exploits and their own sacrificial efforts.

Joshua reminds them that it was God who fought for them (v. 3). We need just such a reminder in our own land today.

2. God Will Help (vv. 4, 5). Joshua had a word of encouragement for the days ahead. There was much yet to be done. The land had not been fully taken. He reminded them of God's help in the past, so that they would depend on it in the future.

It is one mark of a great man that he looks beyond the end of his own short existence and plans for the future.

What about the future? Joshua reminded them that every blessing they had received, every victory they had won, everything had come from the hand of God. There and there alone was their hope for the future. And it was enough!

3. Help Yourself (vv. 6-11). To keep true in the land where their neighbors engaged in idol worship and all manner of immorality required definite action on the part of Israel.

They were not to deviate in the slightest: from God's way, "to the right hand or to the left" (v. 6), for a little beginning in the wrong direction winds up in awful departure from him.

They were not even to swear by the heathen gods, not even to mention them. They were to "cleave" to the Lord, a graphic presentation of the close relation between God and his people.

There are many thoughts here which can be profitably applied to our daily lives. Faith in God calls for stalwart action and separated living for him.

NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

STASSEN DUE TO LEAD PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

WASHINGTON. — Politics is warming up. The young men and women are coming back from foreign fields plainly displeased at the way things are going. Some tell me Uncle Sam is known in many foreign nations as "Uncle Sugar."



Dewey

They tell of waste, inefficiency, or throwing our money around, and talk of getting into politics. The ballot list this fall will contain a lot of veterans who think they can do something in congress, if they get home in time. Certainly the group displeasure of this 12 million voting mass, now fairly well congealed in ideas, threatens a complete overturn of existing legislative personalities—if not the whole political complexion of affairs.

REPUBLICANS ORGANIZE FOR CONGRESS SEATS

Seemingly opportunity, the Republicans are getting busy. The national committee has, for the first time, assumed responsibility in the congressional campaign (committees of congressmen usually head the effort). The staff at headquarters has been about trebled to create 11 departments, one of which has started a monthly newspaper with a circulation to date of 230,000.

A state quota system of raising money (like the Red Cross) has been started, and a small contributions mail campaign has been launched, in order to take financing away from the gentlemen of bulk contributions, known in the political trade as "fat cats."

All this has been done by Governor Dewey's man, Herbert Brownell Jr., the committee chairman, who says his drive is to "elect a Republican congress."

I hear, incidentally, Dewey has told friends he is not in the running for 1948. He points out to them that Republicans have never in history nominated a defeated candidate, which was news to me. Dewey would like the nomination apparently, but does not expect it. Personally I expect much will rest on whether he is re-elected governor this year. Last time he won against a split, and it is possible he will have more formidable opposition this time. If he wins, it will be said no one could have beaten Roosevelt in a war year, and he will be back in the running.

SUPPORT BEING GIVEN STASSEN CAMPAIGN

The Stassen grasp for leadership is finding form, in the way of organization and money. A St. Paul man is on the road traveling for him. The same man was high in the Wilkie entourage, and there are further indications that the New York crowd which backed Wilkie already has its hand in pocket for the former Minnesota governor to be next President. They have been conspicuous at the speakers tables where Stassen spoke. A weekly magazine has published a report that the ex-Lord and Taylor executive, Walter Hoving, who was active in the last Dewey headquarters, will eventually play Hanna for Stassen. The Cowles brothers, publishers, appear to be running the invisible bandwagon so far, particularly brother Mike in Iowa. My Republican sources say he has been hiring people.

All this inside activity has caused many who have observed it to surmise that Stassen will keep on his speaking tours (he has not yet taken a job that I have heard), the organizing will increase in tempo and when the Gallup polls start, Stassen will be on top. Many think he will remain there.

My own opinion is he will have his main trouble keeping in the limelight without a political office, now that he has started so early. Wilkie killed himself doing it.

Bricker is a good bet to come to the senate this year, the in-knowing Republicans agree. With Stassen he is at the top of private party polls now. His '44 difficulty was that he tried to run a campaign with Ohio friends who had not been active in politics. The Dewey people had the New York know-how. With the best of publicity success in his senate race or later in that forum, his chances will depend on whether he can get an organization to match the one now quickly congealing behind Stassen—or which Dewey may set up if events this year warrant.

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To darn the hole in your son's sweater sleeve, baste a square of mosquito netting over the hole on the under side. This makes a firm base on which to do your mending.

Clean the underside of rugs frequently, for dirt works through, and insects are likely to hide underneath.

A little salt in the bottom of the skillet will keep the fat from popping.

Screw a hook into the end of your broom handle. You'll find it handy for reaching objects on high shelves, also the window shade pull that springs to the top. And naturally you hang the broom up by its hook in order to preserve the bristles.

For cleaning tiles in the bathroom and kitchen, use a soft cloth moistened with kerosene.

If salt fish are soaked and cooked in milk they become much sweeter than when soaked in water.

Paint wooden knitting needles and crochet hooks with a coat of colorless nail polish the minute they begin to get rough or scratchy. Smooths them off. Make sure polish is thoroughly dry and hard before putting needles to use again.

Shoes that are stiff after being worn in the rain will become quite pliable if vaseline is well rubbed in with a soft rag.

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War Pensions

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