

# BLACK SOMBRERO

by CLIFFORD KNIGHT

Elsa Chatfield is disinherited by her Aunt Kitty who died of an overdose of morphine. Hunt Rogers and Barry Madison go to Mexico to solve what they believe to be Aunt Kitty's murder. On arriving they find that Elsa's party has preceded them by plane. James Chesebro is murdered, Elsa's father, Sam, meets death from the sword of a marlin when his chair breaks, tipping him into the sea, and George Rumble, a member of the fishing party, is fished out of the sea near the dock. Police chief Lombardo conducts the investigation into these deaths. Reed Barton asks what they were doing with his fishing knife and learns that this is the knife that killed George Rumble.

## CHAPTER XVII

"Practically all," he said. "I think if we were to sort them out properly we could go a long way toward a solution. Perhaps not all the way. We can settle upon several pertinent facts—clues that point toward the solution."

"What are they?"  
Rogers was silent for some moments, turning over in his mind the answer to my question. "I'll name one thing," he began. "It is more important than any other—the picture of Elsa and the baby in the Los Angeles paper." He did not go on for some moments, then he said: "What Chesebro did or said to Elsa that so enraged her interests me very much too. The knife that killed Chesebro is a clue I'd like to discover."

"Are those all?" I asked when he ceased speaking.  
He did not reply at once. I felt that something had come over him, some new thought had struck him. In the darkness that shrouded us I could sense that he was vitally alive to something, some new phase of our problem which had electrified him. I waited with growing impatience, afraid to startle him with any word of mine.

"Barry—the black sombrero!" he said suddenly. He didn't speak again for several moments, then he said: "There's an amazing story here! Incredible! I see it only dimly yet."

Inside Berta, Margaret and Dwight were attempting a three-handed game of bridge—killing slow time, as it were, in the hope that tomorrow would be a brighter day. Rogers, now that I could observe him in the light of the living room lamps, betrayed none of that impulsive energy which in the darkness I fancied he possessed. He was as casual as if he had tired of being out of doors and had come inside for company. He walked about the table, examining the cards each of the players held. Margaret was playing the hand. She fished through Dwight.

"Senora," began Rogers addressing Berta abruptly, "did you not come ashore from the Orizaba that evening prior to our fishing trip?"  
"Yes, senor," she replied after a moment's hesitation. "But only to the muelle—the wharf, with Arturo."  
"Yes?"  
"It is because I have forgotten a promise, senor, to my husband. I should bring his fishing things, his harness, and his belt and knife. And I forgot. When I remember it I go ashore to find somebody to send with a note to the rancho for them."

"Did you find someone?"  
"Oh, yes. Two boys. I send them in a taxi."  
"Did you wait for their return?"  
"No, senor. I go back to the boat and Arturo brings the things to me later."

"Did you see Senor Rumble on the wharf, senora?"  
"No, senor. I see no one."  
"What time was it?"  
"That I do not know, senor. I do not think it is very late."

The cards by now were abandoned and the players moved to more comfortable chairs. Doctor Cruz appeared in the doorway and behind him Lombardo. They came in and we greeted them. I wondered what their mission was. Rogers continued to stand. His gaze was restless; he seemed to fix upon Elsa's small black hat, which still lay on the table against the wall, with a sort of satisfaction, although I couldn't understand why.

"Elsa has retired?" he inquired.  
"Oh, no; she and Reed are around somewhere," Margaret answered.  
At that moment Elsa, followed by Reed Barton, appeared at the study door.

"Did I hear my name mentioned?" she called.  
"Hunt Rogers was worrying about you," I said.  
"But I wasn't," Rogers objected. "I merely inquired what had become of you. I'd not seen you since dinner."

In the brief moments of this conversation, Rogers had walked a few steps toward Elsa. The table where her hat lay was close at hand. He reached out of a sudden and picked up the quilt which lay partly concealed underneath it, and held it up before his eyes as if studying the knob with the carved head. Elsa continued to walk toward him. Somehow Rogers had managed to center our gaze upon what he was doing. I found myself staring slightly at the quilt. It brought back to mind that vivid scene of Elsa racing madly toward the house, of her horse suddenly checked and the de-

scending lash upon the unsuspecting Chesebro. Elsa's eyes were now fixed upon what Rogers was doing; a sort of fascination gripped her.

"I've been wondering," said Rogers with a faint smile, "what I might find concealed in this thing." He twisted at the knob. It was the wrong way. He reversed the pressure, and the knob slipped slightly like a screw. To my amazement he pulled the knob loose from the handle of the quilt, drawing with it from its concealment a long, thin-bladed knife of finely tempered steel.

"You must have had a very great provocation that morning to murder," Rogers' voice hardened a trifle.  
"More than you realize," Elsa flashed. She seemed to stand taller, her gray eyes turned full upon Rogers.

"If I had to guess what that provocation was," began Rogers, as if he were feeling his way into a dark room and would welcome a light, "I should hazard that it had something to do with the picture of you and the baby." He paused for a fraction of a second, as if giving Elsa an opportunity to speak, then went on: "The child bore a very strong likeness to Jimmy the Cheese. I assume that he was the father."

"You are correct," said Elsa with dignity.

"George Rumble, after the picture of you and the child appeared in the paper, told me something which rather cleared him of any intent of wrongdoing," Rogers went on. "He said he first saw that picture of you and the baby at your Aunt Kitty's."



"Barry—the black sombrero!"

He asked her about it and your aunt told him that it was your baby—"She lied!" Elsa flashed. "I'm not the mother of that baby!" she said fiercely. She added more softly: "I'm glad, though, you told me how George got his information. I never asked him."

Something like a sigh of relief seemed to stir in the room. Elsa stood firmly, defiantly before Rogers, flanked by Reed Barton. Berta sat forward in her seat, an eagerness in her manner, something trembling on her lips. Rogers asked, "Who was the mother, Elsa?"  
"Aunt Kitty!"

"Please, may I say something?" said Berta quickly.  
"Of course, senora," Rogers turned to her.

"There are some things I should tell," she began in her precise English. "Elsa does not know I know these facts; my husband did not know I had so much knowledge. But my cousin, Maria Mendez, who is a nurse at the hospital, told me. Aunt Kitty's child was born in the hospital here at Mazatlan. She came secretly here, wanting to be near her brother, and yet for some strange reason not telling him she was even in the town until after the child was born."

"Later, on a steamer day, she sent word, pretending that she had come ashore for the few hours the steamer stopped. She explained the child by saying its mother had died at sea and she expected to adopt it. Sam went to see her," Berta went on rapidly, a deep fire in her eyes.

"She would not come to the rancho, because of me. She would not even permit him to tell me anything about her being here at the time. Only after Maria had told me later something of what had happened, did I learn about it from Sam. But he made me promise never to talk of it. Things, of course," she gestured vehemently with her small, ivory-tinted hands—"are different now. It is time to talk."

"You are right, Senora Chatfield," said Rogers. "It is time to talk." He turned to Elsa, a questioning look in his mild blue eyes, and seemed to wait for some word from her.

Elsa had listened to Berta without a change of expression. She now looked at Rogers steadily, her level gray eyes fixed upon his; the lines had smoothed out of her face; her voice when next she spoke was quite calm.

"Perhaps you're right, both of you," she said. "Having kept still so long, however, it really makes little difference with me now." She continued to stand before Rogers as if answering to him, ignoring the others who sat silently in their chairs.

"I ran away from school in the East. I went to New York, because I'd decided to be an artist. Father knew what I'd done and approved it. I didn't tell Aunt Kitty and she didn't know where I was. After I'd been there nearly a year father one day telegraphed me that Aunt Kitty needed me. That was the first mistake. She never needed anybody. But just the same I flew to San Francisco. I was seventeen, and I didn't have any sense."

Rogers interrupted her. "Won't you sit down, Elsa?"  
She smiled at him. "No, thank you," she answered, continuing to stand easily before us. "I met Aunt Kitty when she got off the boat with the baby. Father had written me at San Francisco, telling me what he believed was the truth. I'd had only the telegram. Of course, I was sort of stunned; nothing like this had ever happened to our family. I was very frank to say so; she had it coming to her after the way she'd brought me up. Aunt Kitty turned on me so fiercely I thought she was going to strike me. She denied it was her child. She said Father had lied to me. It was a baby she was going to adopt. But I stuck to the point like the little fool I was. I threatened to kidnap the child and go home with it and announce it as my own, just to shame her. That was the second mistake. I didn't carry out my threat, but it was only because I couldn't get the child away from her."

"You returned home together, then, you and your aunt?" Rogers suggested.

"Yes. I'd used up all my money in going to San Francisco, and father couldn't send me any more at that time. Aunt Kitty would not give me any to go back to New York. She'd buy me anything I wanted, though, in the way of clothing. She'd never been really generous. I couldn't understand it now. I thought before this that I'd hated her, but we were really only beginning to hate each other."

"Then one day I woke up to what had happened to me. Odd how you can be the center of gossip and never hear a whisper of it. It's like being in the center of a hurricane, everything is so quiet. Months had passed before the maid one day said something to me about 'my baby.' I was furious. I went to Aunt Kitty. She laughed. 'The whole town thinks it's yours,' she said. She laughed again. 'And it's going to be yours. You can't prove it's not. You ran away from school, so the school authorities can't help you deny it. It comes down to your word and mine, and mine will be believed before yours. So what?'  
"There I was," said Elsa simply. "What could I do? She had me, and I knew it. So all I could do was to go on hating her more and more. When the baby died—it didn't make any difference. I could only go on as I had been going, hating her with every breath I drew, and hoping to live it down some day."

"Tell me now about Chesebro and what happened the other day," instructed Rogers matter-of-factly.  
Elsa laughed shortly, but there was no mirth in her voice. "Elsa, the brilliant caricaturist," she said sarcastically, "never saw that resemblance in the child to Jimmy the Cheese. She had to be told by Jimmy himself in one of his several fantastic proposals of marriage." There was a tinge of scorn in her voice. "He'd made advances to me in his elephantine way ever since Aunt Kitty's death. He didn't seem to mean it until a short time ago. I detested him and I told him so. Then came that picture in the paper. He was very contrite that day we went for a ride. He begged a thousand pardons; he groveled before me—literally. Finally he startled me with the statement that he was the father of the child, and before he was through gabbling he admitted that it was his idea originally and not Aunt Kitty's that the gossip be started at home that the child was mine." Elsa's voice ceased for a moment and then took up again in a quiet, dead level tone.

For several moments none of us realized just what we had heard, or that Elsa had reached the end of her recital. There had been no bitterness in her tone at any time, no emotion until she had come to Chesebro, when something of that immense anger she had shown on that day she turned so savagely upon the man who had been at the bottom of all of her troubles glowed in the fiery pinpoints in her eyes. Rogers' voice startled me when he finally spoke.

"You make that statement of your own free will, do you, Elsa?"  
"Why, yes, of course."  
(TO BE CONTINUED)

## 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 June 4

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#### PAUL IN EPHESUS

LESSON TEXT—Acts 19:8-10; Ephesians 2:4-10; 3:14-19.  
GOLDEN TEXT—We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.—Ephesians 2:10.

Not peace—but a sword! With such graphic words Jesus indicated that His coming into the world would set men apart, either for or against Him (see Matt. 10:34-42). The gospel is the good news of redemption for all mankind, but the attitude of men toward the gospel divides them sharply, into the saved and the lost. Which are you?

Our lesson, telling of Paul's ministry at Ephesus and giving part of his letter to the Ephesians, shows that the gospel does divide, but that it also gives quickening grace and strength for Christian living.

I. Dividing (Acts 19:8-10). Paul had a long ministry at Ephesus and a very successful one, but at the same time it was a stormy, trying experience. After all, do not those elements often go together? Paul began in the synagogue. That was the proper way, and his custom. He ran into opposition, and after three months he had to seek another place to meet the people. But notice, he did not give up and leave town.

The teaching of any truth results in division, and especially is that true of the gospel. It was found before long (vv. 23-41) that winning people to Christ interfered with the heathen business interests, and then things began to stir.

One wonders why modern business set for the destruction of men's souls by rotten plays, movies, books, amusements, and by the saloon is so content to let the church alone. Is it because our testimony does not harm their business? If so, we are certainly not walking in the footsteps of Paul or of Christ.

Christ is a divider of men. Yes, but those who stand on the right side of that divide also receive

#### II. Quickening (Eph. 2:4-10).

Dead men, spiritually, come to life when they meet Christ and believe on Him. We were all dead in trespasses and sins, entirely unable to help ourselves, when God in mercy and grace quickened us.

He did this for us, but also for His own glory. That really is the most adequate explanation of grace. It was and is for His glory, a showing forth (v. 7) of the exceeding riches of His grace, through all the ages to come.

Being saved, then, is not (as some describe it) a foolish thing of little import, that takes place in some mission or little crossroads Sunday school. It does happen there, thank God for that, but it reaches clear up to the highest heavens, and on into all eternity. This business of bringing men and women, boys and girls to Christ is the greatest of all occupations. Let's be busy about it! Be sure to note in verses 8-10 that it is all of grace. No works can enter into salvation. We are "his workmanship," not the result of a cooperative enterprise or creation.

But at the same time do not fail to stress that we are created "unto good works" (v. 10). The professed Christian who talks about being saved by grace, but who does not live it out in the good works which God has ordained as the proper expression of salvation by grace, should not be surprised if the testimony of his lips is not believed.

If we are quickened to newness of life in Christ, we ought to bring forth fruit. That is not possible in our own puny strength. But wait, the gospel which divides and quickens is also—

#### III. Strengthening (Eph. 3:14-19).

Paul prayed for the Ephesians, but somehow one feels that he prayed for the Christians of all time, for every member of "the whole family in heaven and earth" (v. 15) who bear the name of Christ. The writer is rejoicing today that he belongs to that family, but he wonders how it is with you who read these lines. Do you belong?

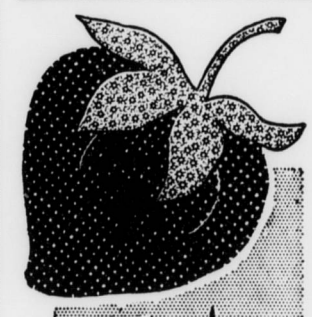
Paul prayed in the Spirit, that is evident as one reads these sublime words. It is a comforting and encouraging thought, too, for Paul here asks for a Christian experience for his readers, which seems quite impossible of attainment, except for one thing. It is the power of God which is to bring it about. Prayer in the Spirit is prayer that God answers, always and fully.

So we read with confidence these magnificent, enriching petitions, and we say: "O God, make me that kind of a Christian, a real Christian."

Observe that there is to be a strengthening of the inward man by the Holy Spirit. This is not something "put on" or acquired. It is God's gift.

Note also that it has a normal development, a growth in the knowledge of Christ because of an ability to "comprehend" (v. 18). Is not that our great need? We are unspiritually rich in Christ, but we do not seem to know enough to take out our inheritance.

## Things to do



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