Saturday, Sept., 28, 1912



## CHAPTER I.

The Vanishing Portrait.

to enumerate, and far too sacred to Evelyn Grayson, meeting me on the discuss. From which it may rightly old Boston Post Road, between Green- be inferred that we understood each wich and Stamford, gave me a mesother, Evelyn and I, and that we were sage from her uncle. That is the already considerably beyond the state logical beginning of this story; though or condition of mere formal acquaintto make everything quite clear from anceship, the start it may be better to hark It was It was no Queen Titania who now

back a few months, to the day on came gliding to a stand beside me on the broad, level, well-oiled highway, under a double row of arching elms. It which Evelyn Grayson and I first met. Then, as now, we were each driving

our own car; she, a great sixty horsepower machine, all glistening pale yellow, and I, a compact six-cylinder racer, of dull dusty gray. But we were not on any such broad, roomy thor-

oughfare as the Boston Post Road. On the contrary we were short-cutting through a narrow, rough lane, beset by stone walls and interrupted at intervals by a series of sharp and treacherous angles.

I know I shall never forget the momentary impression I received. Out of the golden sunlight, it seemed to me, there had emerged suddenly a tableau of Queen Titania on a topaz throne-the fairest Queen Titania imagiation ever conjured-and I, in my mad, panting speed was about to into the gauzy fabric of that creation and rend it with brutal, torturing onrush of relentless, hard-driven nickel steel. I take no credit to myself for what I did. Volition was absent. My hands acted on an impulse above and beyond all tardy mental guidance. For just a flashing instant the gray nose of my car rose before me, as in strenuous assault it mounted half way to the coping of the roadside wall. I felt my seat dart ed light which filtered through the away from beneath me, was conscious of my body in swift, unsupported aerial flight, and then-but it is idle to attempt to set down the conglomerate sensations of that small fraction of a second. When I regained coniness, Queen Titania was kneeling in the dust of the lane beside me -a very distressed and anxious Queen Titania, with wide, startled eyes, and quiveringly sympathetic lips-and about us were a half dozen or more of the vicinal country folk.

and certainly in no wise responsible was involved; yet my anxiety was for-the pervading infestivity. He had none the less eager. Already my sym-Between that meeting in mid-May and this meeting on the old Boston Post Road in mid-September, there had been others, of course; for Queen Titania, whose every-day name, as I have said, was Evelyn Grayson, was the niece and ward of my nearest neighbor, Mr. Robert Cameron, a genleman recently come to reside on what for a century and more had been known as the old Townsbury Estate, extending for quite a mile along the Connecticut shore of Long Island Sound in the neighborhood of Green-

The intervening four months had drawn, Cameron continued for a time As such, I again put it from my to discuss with me topics of general | thoughts; but today I received a secwitnessed the gradual growth of as near an approach to intimacy between Cameron and myself as was possible considering the manner of man that

al charms, both of person and disposition-charms too numerous indeed

was no gossamer fairy, but Hebe, the Goddess of Youth, with creamy skin

"What ho, Sir Philip! We are well

And then she told me that her Uncle

Robert had telephoned for me, leav-

ing a message with my man, bidding

me come to him at my earliest leisure.

"Why not come for dinner?" she add-

"But you?" I queried; for her car

"Of course I'll come," I answered

more in my voice than the simple words, for her lids drooped, for just

a breath, and the color flamed sudden

But, after all, I saw very little of

her that evening. It is true that she

sat on my right at table, piquantly, youthfully beautiful in the softly tint-

pink and silver filigree candle-shades,

but the atmosphere of the dinner was

tinged by a vague, unreasoning con-

straint as from some ominously brood-

ing yet undefinable influence which

overhung the three of us. And when

the coffee and liqueurs were served,

her going, she bade us good-night, and

In justice to Cameron, I must add

that he appeared least affected by-

been, indeed, rather less demure than

role of Lady Bountiful and of her

Noroton beneficiaries. As for the sub-

ject upon which he desired to consult

me, it had not been so much as men-

tioned; so in looking back, it seems

impossible that matters of which

neither Evelyn nor I was at the time informed could have exerted an effect,

save through Cameron's undetected.

Even after his niece had with-

subconscious inducement.

left us, not to return.

employing some slender pretext for of advertising circulars."

was often his wont, chatting with al- I could only hope that he had mental-

most gayety concerning Evelyn's new | ly exaggerated the gravity of the situ-

below her lowered lashes.

I think she must have heard

was headed in the opposite direction. I am going alone to Norton. I have

ed; and her eyes gave accent to her

words.

her,

know. You'll come?"

fternoon. I have received an anonyus letter." There was an all too apparent asimption of nonchalance in his man- strange silhousette which Cameron ner of expression to deceive even the , had mentioned. least observant, of which I am not | It is difficult for me to convey the one. The effect was to augment the most meager idea of the emotional inseriousness of the revelation. I saw fluence which these two brief com-

at once that he was more disgulated . munications exerted. They seemed to than he would have me know. He was leaning forward, a little Nemesis far in excess of anything to constrainedly, his left hand gripping the arm of his chair, the fingers of his

written words When I had finished the treading of right hand toying with the stem of When I had finished the reading of his gold-rimmed Bohemian liqueur them aloud, Cameron, leaning far back in his chair, sat silently thoughtful, ginss. his eyes narsowed behind his glasses

e to some shortcom

"I think you told me once, Clyde, tenor continued, the that you rather prided yourself on ceased. It went on:

ing of which I had been unwittingly

my host's discourse. Emerging from

your ability to get a line on one's

"An anonymous letter!" I repeated, with a deprecatory smile. "Anonymous but fixed apparently upon the lights behind me. And so, reluctant to interletters should be burned and forgotand red lips and a lilting melody of ten. Surely you're not bothering about them through again slowly, this time the writer

age and fear; and I saw fear win.

almost precisely what you now ad-

vise. Certainly I followed one-half of

your prescription-I forgot the letter;

though, for lack of fire in the dog

days, I did not burn it, but thrust it

into a drawer with an accumulation

My apprehension lest Evelyn and I

pathy and co-operation were enlisted.

that his inclination would be to err

"And now something has happened

"Something happened very shortly

after its receipt," he replied. "Some-

thing very puzzling. But in spite of

that, I was inclined to treat the matter

as a bit of clever chicanery, devised

for the purpose, probably, of extortion.

in the opposite direction.

to recall it to your memory?"

for smile, was replying.

to myself, fixing each sentence indel-I wish I could put before you an exact reproduction of Cameron's face as ibly in mind as I proceeded. But be-I then saw it; those rugged outlines, rore I had quite come to the end, my the heritage of Scottish ancestry, softened and refined by a brilliant intel-

companion was speaking. "Well?" he said. And the light cheeriness of his tone was not only in ectuality; the sturdy chin and square jaw; the heavy underlip meeting the marked contrast with his grave abupper in scarcely perceptible curve; sorption of a moment before, but in ingly lost in thought.

imagine wherein I might have laid my sum follows sun, so follows all that is self open to the disapproval of this decreed. The ways of our God are most munctillous of guardians—for I many. On the righteous he showers expected nothing less than a studious-blessings; on the evil he pours

guilty-I momentarily lost track of ond began with the same sentence

iny abstraction it was with a measure in turn be twrought upon you." of relief that I heard him saying: "I think you told me once, Clyde, tenor continued, the verbal identity

your ability to get a line on one's "Once more, as carnest/of what is character from his handwriting, decreed, there will be shown unto you

That's why I telephoned for you this a symbol of our power. Precautio

misery."

That was the first letter. The sec

"That which you have wrought shall

cannot avail. Fine words and a smil-

And beneath, each letter was the

ing countenance make not virtue."

the broad, homely nose; the small, but alert, gray eyes, shining through jarring discord with my own present mood. them?" the round lenses of his spectacles; the

My annoyance found voice in my re-I am going alone to Norton. I have high, broad, sloping, white brow and a hamper in the tonneau for that poor the receding border of dark brown,

"Cameron,"" I begged, "for God's O'Malley family. I shall be back in slightly grizzled hair. That, supersake he serious. This doesn't seem We dine at half-past seven, you ficially, was the face. But I saw more to me exactly a mather to be merry than that. In the visage of one natover. I don't want to alarm you, but urally brave I saw a battle waged besomehow I feel that these-" and I hind a mask-a battle between courshook the crackling, wax-like sheets, "that these cannot be utterly ignored." Then the mask became opaque once "But they are anonymous," he remore, and Cameron, giving me smile torted, not unjustly. "Anonymous letters i should be burned and forgot-"There are anonymous letters and ten.

anonymous letters. Ordinarily your "There are anonymous letters and method is the one I should pursue. In anonymous letters," I gave him back. deed I may say that when, about a in turn. "These are of an unusually month or so ago, I received a com convincing character. Bealdes, they munication of that character, I did

And then I paused. I wished to tell him of that elusive encompassment of sinister portent which had so mpressed me; of that malign foreboding beyond anything warranted by the words; but I stumbled in the effort at expression. "Besides," I started again, and ended lamely, "I don't like the look and the feel of them."

were personally affected had been by And now he was as serious as l now quite dissipated. It was perfectly could wish. apparent to me that Cameron alone

"Ah!" he cried, leaning forward again and reaching for the letters. "You have experienced it, too! And you can't explain it, any more than 1?

It is something that grips you when you read, like an icy hand, hard as ation, yet my judgment of him was steel, in a glove of velvet. It's always between the lines, reaching out,

and nothing you can do will stay it I thought at first I imagined it, but the oftener I have read, the more I have felt its clutch. The letters of themselves are nothing. What do you suppose I care for veiled threats of that sort? I'm blg enough to take care of myself, Clyde. I've met peril in about every possible guise, in every part of the world, and I've never real ferent. And the worst of it is, I don't

ant-the first on the fourieenth or hugust; the second, this morning, the ourieenth of September." "And they were not delivered by

"So far as I can learn, no." "It is very odd," I commented, with feeble banality.

I took the letters from his hands once more, and held them in turn between my vision and the candie-light, hoping, perchance, to discover a wa-ter-mark in the paper. But I was not rewarded.

"You examined the envelopes carefully, I presume?" was my query as I returned the sheets to the table.

"More than carefully," he answered "But you shall see them, if you like. I found no trace of any identifying mark.'

Thus far he had made no further mention of the "puzzling happening" which followed the receipt of the first letter, and in the interest provoked by breathe a grim spirit of implacable the letters themselves I had foreborne to question him; but now as the words be found in the euphemism of the "seventh day hence" fell again under my eye, standing out, as it were, from the rest of the script which lay up-

> turned on the table before me, I was conscious of a stizulated concern, and so made inquiry.

"I wish you would tell me, first, rupt his reverie, I started to read whether anything really did occur on the seventh day.

> "I was coming to that," he replied; but it seemed to me that prompt though his response was, there was a shade of reluctance in his manner; for he relapsed into silence for what must have been the better part of a minute, and with eyes lowered sat seem-

Then he rose, abruptly, and saying "Well? What do you make of "Suppose we go into my study, Clyde," led the way from the dining room across the great, imposing, grained and fretted hall to that comparatively small mahogany and green symphony wherein he was wont to spend most of his indoor hours. It was always a rather gloomy room at night, with its high dark ceiling, its heavy and voluminous olive tapestry hangings, wholly out of keeping, it seemed to me, with the season-and its shaded lights confined to the vicinity of the massive polished, and gilt-ornamented writing table of the period of the First Empire. And it impressed me now, in conjunction with Cameron's promised revelation, as more than ever grim and awesome.

I remember helping myself to cigar from the humidor which stood on the antique cabinet in the corner near the door. I was in the act of lighting it when Cameron spoke.

"I want you to sit in this chair," he said, indicating one of sumptuous upholstery which stood beside the writing table, facing the low, long bookcases lining the opposite wall.

I did as he bade me, while he remained standing. "Do you, by any chance," he asked,

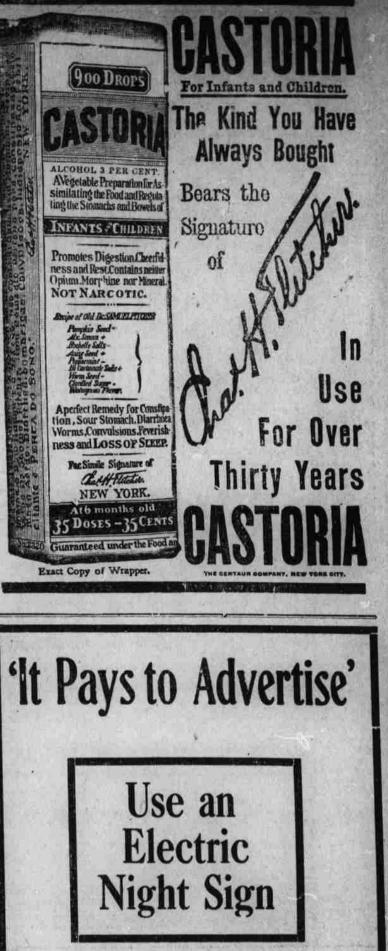
'remember a portrait which hung above the book-shelves?"

I remembered it very well. It was a painting of himself, done some years back. But now my gaze sought it in vain.

"Certainly," I answered. "It hung there," pointing.

"Quite right. Now I want you to observe the shelf-top. You see how crowded it is."

It was indeed crowded. Bronze busts and statuettes; yachting and golf trophies in silver; framed photographs; a score of odds and ends, souvenirs gathered the world over. There was scarcely an inch of space unoc cupied. I had frequently observed this plethora of ornament and resented it. It gave to that part of the room the



Let's Talk It Over

mean to imply naught to my neigh- publication of which had just begun bor's discredit. He was in all respects in The Week, of which I am owner admirable-a gentleman of education and culture, widely traveled, of exalt- first that it might be in this conneced ideals and noble principles to which tion he wished to consult me, I very he gave rigid adherence. But-I was about to qualify this by describing him as reserved and taciturn. I fear, as a text for certain views of his own though, to give a wrong impression. He was scarcely that. There were nents, however, when he was unresponsive, and he was never demonstrative. He had more poise than any man I know. He allowed you to see just so much of him, and no more. At times he was almost stubbornly reti-And yet, in spite of these qualities, which appeared to be cultivated rather than inherent, he gave repeated evidence of a nature at once so simple and kindly and sympathetic as to command both confidence and affec-

To the progress of my intimacy with Evelyn there had been no such imperamental impediment. She was fearleasily outspoken, with a frankness born of unspoiled innocence; barely six weeks having elapsed between her graduation from the tiny French con-vent of Sainte Barbe near Paris and our particus in that conour perilous encounter in that con-tracted, treacherous, yet blessed little Connecticut lans. And she possessed, moreover, a. multiplicity of addition-

Cameron was. By which statement I Resources of the United States," the ing." and editor; and though I fancied at soon discerned that he was merely using a statement contained therein on the conservation and development of the country's timber supply.

I go thus into what may seem un interesting detail, partly that I may give a hint as to the character of Cameron's mind, but more especially to indicate how lightly he would have had me think he regarded that for which be sought me.

Meanwhile my curiosity grew keen- them both. The writing is very curier. It was natural, I suppose, that I ous-I have never seen anything just should fancy Evelyn involved in some like it-and the signature, if I may call way. In fact I then attributed the de- it that, is still more singular. On the ression during dinner to her knowl- first letter, I took it for a blot. But dge of what her uncle and guardian on the second letter occurs the same

purposed to say to me. Likewise I found in this conception the reason for her sudden and unusual desertion. Diack blur or smudge of identical out. Orient. And yet the profile is not that of an Oriental Now, look at your yes-sel agafh." And once more I reversed Hitherto when I had dined here Evelyn had remained with us while we smoked our cigaretten, leading us at length to the music room, where for a glad half-hour the rich melody of her youthful sweet contraito voice mingled in pleasing harmony with her niment. own plano ac

And while I vainly made effort to

FREE TO YOU-MY SISTER Free to You and Every Sister But ering from Woman's Allments.

til mail, free of any cha

Tree of any charge, my loss less mitractions to any sufferer from the . I want to tell all women about my reader, for yourmell, you mother, or your sister. I want to outper vournoites a home with als cure-ps, hiy render, for This curve-put, may reader, for pointmeld, your danghiar, your indices, i want to faught in your indices, i want to faught in your of a doology. Mean share, i want to for the help of a doology. Mean share, i have been used in the help of a doology. Mean share, i have the help of a doology. Mean share, i have the help of a doology. Mean share any doology. I have the help of a doology when a set of the first and surrection of the mfile and surrections is in mfile and surrections of the mfile and surrections the mfile and surrection of the mfile and the surrectio

.. Notre Dame, Ind., U.S.A.

I fear my imagination was sluggish. Although, in spite of his dissemblance, I saw that he was sty .ngely moved by these happenings, I could fancy no very terrifying concomitants of the rather commonplace facts he had narrated. For anonymous letters 1 had ever held scant respect. An ambushed enemy, I argued, is admittedly a coward. And so I was in danger of grow-

ing impatient. "When the second letter came," he continued, bringing his left hand forward to join his right on the dazzling white ground of the table's damask, "I searched among the circulars for the first, and found it. I want you to see

Of course I thought of the Black Hand. It was the natural corollary, seeing that the newspapers had been giving us a surfeit of Black Hand threats and Black Hand outrages. But,

somehow, I did not dare to voice it. To have suggested anything so ordinary to Cameron in his present mood would have been to offer him offense

And when, at the next moment, he

drew from an inner pocket of his even ning coat two thin, wax-like sheets o paper and passed them to me, I was giad that I had kept silence. For the letters were no rough, rude scrawls of an illiterate Mafia or Camorrs. In phraseology as well as in penman-ship they were impressively unique. "If you don't mind," Cameron was

maying, "you might read them aloud." He rose and switched on a group of He rose and switched on a group of electric wall lights at my back, and I marked for the hundredth time his physique—his towering height, his powerful shoulders, his leanness of hip and sturdy straightness of limb. He did not look the forty years to which he confessed.

One of the long French windows which gave upon the terrace stood ajar, and before resuming his sent Cameron paused to close it, dropping over it the looped curtains of silver aray velvet that matched the walls. In the succeeding moment the room was ghostly alient; and then, breaking against the stillness, was the sound of my voice, reading: "That which you have wrought shall in turn be wrought upon you. Take warning therefore of what shall hap-pen, on the sarenth day, hence. As One of the long French windows

He had gone very pale, and his strong, capable hands, which toyed with the two letters, quivered and twitched in excess of nervous tension, Then, with a finger pointing to the ink-stain at the bottom of one of the sheets, he asked:

"What does that look like to you?" I took the letter from him, and scrutinizing the rude figure with concentrated attention for a moment, ventured the suggestion that it somewhat sembled a boat.

"A one-masted wessel, square rigged," he added, in elucidation. "Exactly."

"Now turn it upside down." I did so.

"Now what do you see?" "The head of a man wearing a hel-The resemblance was very met." marked.

"A straw helmet, apparently," he amplified, "such as is worn in the

sel agafn." And once more I reversed the sheet of paper.

"Can it be a Chinese junk?" I asked. "It might be a sailing pros or ban-ca," he returned, "such as they use in the South Pacific. But whatever it is, I can't understand what it has to do with me or I with it."

I was still studying the black daub, when he said:

"But you haven't told me about the handwriting. What can you read of the character of the writer?"

"Nothing," I answered, promptly. "It is curious penmanship, as you say -heavy and regular and upright, with some strangely formed letters; es-pecially the f's and the y's; but it ells me nothing."

tells me nothing." "But I thought--" he began. "That I boasted? So I did. When one writes as one habitually writes it is very easy. These letters, however, are not in the writer's ordinary hand. The writing is as artificial as though you, for example, had printed a note in Roman characters. Were they ad-dressed in the same hand?" "Previously." dealers.

12 Church St.

semblance of a curiosity shop. When I had nodded my assent, he went on: "On the afternoon of Friday, August twenty-first, seven days after the recelpt of that first letter, I was sitting where you are sitting now. I was reading, and deeply interested. I had put the letter, as I told you, entirely out of my mind. I had forgotten it, absolutely. That seventh-day business I had regarded-if I regarded it at all -as idle vaporing. That this was the afternoon of the seventh day did not occur to me until afterwards. I recall me, and that while in contemplation I 157 Church Street fixed my eyes upon that portrait. I remember that, because it struck me, then, that the flesh tints of the face had grown muddy and that the thing would be better for a cleaning. I recall, too, that at that moment, the little clock, yonder, struck three. I resumed my reading; but presently, another statement demanding cogitation, I lowered my book, and once more my eyes rested on the portrait. But not on the mpddy flesh tints, because-" he paused and leaned forward, towards me, speaking with impressive empha-"Because," he repeated, "there sie. were no flesh tints there. Because there was no head nor face there!" I sat up suddenly, open-mouthed, speechless. Only my wide eyes made question.

"Cut from the canvas," he went on, in lowered voice, "clean and sharp from crown to collar. And the hands of the clock pointed to twelve min-utes past three."

(To Be Continued.)

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