

THREE SHUTTERED HOUSES

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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SYNOPSIS

Driving home through a torrential rain, young, well-to-do Clint Jervies picks up a girl, scantily clad, running in terror-stricken flight down the road. She rides a short ways, leaves the car and runs into the woods. He decides to talk to his dear friend, Inspector Tope and Miss Moss, about his adventure. Clint still thinks of her as Miss Moss, his former guardian, though she and the Inspector are married. Clint, having settled down, now manages the Jervies estate himself. In three shuttered houses, all gloomy and forbidding, on Kenesaw Hill, near where Clint picked up the frightened girl, lived three families. In one house lived old Denman Hurder, his wife, who had been Ella Kenesaw, and his daughter, Kitty Leaford, and her daughter June. Living in a second house was Aunt Evie Taine, Uncle Justus and brothers Rab and Ass. The third held old Matthew Bowdon and his wife. Living on the estate was a man known only to June as "Uncle Jim." Following their usual custom the three families gathered in the Hurder home Saturday night. Kitty, June's mother, retired early with a headache. She was given warm milk and insisted on taking two sleeping tablets, one more than usual. Strangely upset, June slept fitfully, and in the middle of the night went in to see her mother. Her uncomfortable position warned June that her mother was not sleeping. She was dead. Panic-stricken, June ran from the room, got the unlocked door, and into the storm to get Doctor Cabler. It was here that Clint Jervies picked her up.

interest in his eyes; and Clint caught him by the arm, demanding:

"What is it, Inspector? What did Harquail say?"

Tope sat down at the breakfast-table again. "I need another cup of coffee, Mrs. Tope," he said. "To think this over." And while she poured it, he began to explain:

"You heard me ask Charley if Denman Hurder had any children," he reminded them; and he chuckled. "That surprised Charley," he said, "with a certain gratified vanity in his tones. 'Charley wanted to know how I got onto it, and I asked him what he was talking about.'"

He hesitated, said soberly: "This is what he told me: Mr. Hurder had a daughter named Katherine. She eloped, twenty-odd years ago, with a man named Jerry Leaford. Leaford didn't amount to much, Charley said. He said there was a row at the time, and finally she and Leaford went home to live with

way they do." He spoke to Miss Moss. "This girl I took home, Mabel Gaye—she was tight. Bound she'd kiss me good night. Wanted me to stay—"

Miss Moss smiled at the austerity behind his words. "She'll be grateful to you today," she suggested.

Tope said in a mirthful tone: "And you no sooner get rid of her, than another one comes out in her nightgown to waylay you, Clint. What is this strange power of yours?"

Clint laughed, and then the telephone rang. Tope went briskly across the room. He said:

"Hello! . . . Yes, speaking . . . Oh, yes, Inspector."

A silence, while he listened. Then: "Yes, thanks."

Another silence; and then Tope said:

"Why, I'll come out and see you, and bring him along. Sure."

He put up the receiver and turned back to them; and Miss Moss saw that his eyes shone.

"What is it?" Clint demanded.

"Inspector Heale tells me he called up the Medical Examiner," Tope explained. "Doctor Derrie had had no report on the death, so Heale called the family doctor. Doctor Cabler hadn't notified him. Cabler was called in late last night, slept late this morning. That's why he hadn't phoned Doc Derrie. He said there wasn't any hurry."

And he explained: "Mrs. Leaford had been taking this dope for years. She took an overdose once before, and came near passing out. This time it was nearer than that."

"Dead when Doctor Cabler got there?" Tope inquired.

"Before that, I guess," Heale explained; and he looked at Tope and then at Clint inquiringly. "But I want to know how you heard about it," he reminded them, and Tope bade Clint tell the tale of his adventure the night before.

So Clint repeated his story; and Inspector Heale listened without interruption till he was done.

"The girl was Miss Leaford," he explained then. "Mrs. Leaford's daughter. She found her mother dead, and the telephone was out of order on account of the shower, so she ran to get the doctor." He grinned. "I didn't know she made the trip in her nightgown," he admitted. "They're a queer lot up there, and she's as queer as the rest of them."

"They're that way about everything," Inspector Heale insisted. "You take electric lights. Hurder put them in his house, here a few years back; and then the others hooked his meter, to save meter deposits. The light company kicked, but those folks on the Hill, they mostly get their own way when they want it. Old Mrs. Bowdon—she's seventy if she's a day—you can argue with her till you're blind and she don't give an inch."

"And Mrs. Taine's as bad," Heale continued. "She's one of these thin, stringy women in a black dress; and she talks in a kind of whisper as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. She can strip the hide off you and never raise her voice. She's a worker, too. She'll put on overalls and go right at it. Do anything. For instance, she wired her own house and Bowdon's, and hooked up the wires in Hurder's cellar. If I didn't know they had money, I'd think they didn't have a cent, the way she works all the time."

Clint began: "Miss Leaford—"

The Inspector said guardedly: "Why, she might be all right, for all I know. She's always slipping around through the woods, alone, like a wild animal; and she never speaks to you. Passes you right by—"

"The girl was afraid," Clint agreed. "But what would they be afraid of?"

"Well," Tope reminded him, his tone suddenly grim, "A woman died of poison in there last night. If she'd known it was going to happen, she'd have had a right to be afraid."

So Clint was silenced; and they came on into the suburban town that was their destination, and found Police Headquarters. Miss Moss elected to stay in the car while they went inside.

Inspector Heale came to meet them. He was lean and gray, and his brows were extravagantly bushy. He shook Tope's hand, and spoke some hearty word.

"Might have known you'd be around," he said humorously. "You old buzzard! How do you hear about these things so soon? I didn't even know Mrs. Leaford was dead till you called me up."

"Done anything?" Tope asked seriously.

Inspector Heale bade them come into his office and closed the door, and he shook his head. "No," he confessed. "Doctor Derrie's gone to look her over, of course. Doctor Cabler hadn't notified him. Cabler was called in late last night, slept late this morning. That's why he hadn't phoned Doc Derrie. He said there wasn't any hurry."

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Mining Town Is Ghost at Last

Only Shacks Are Reminder Of Old Boom Days in Wyoming City.

SOUTH PASS CITY, WYO.—Wyoming's newest ghost town, South Pass City, has only a few weather-beaten frame shacks to remind visitors of the days when it boasted of a population of 5,000 gold-hunters, pioneers and gamblers.

Abandoned more than 30 years after the rest of the state's famous early-time mining camps were deserted by their nomadic settlers, South Pass City is surrounded by several booming modern mining camps. It lies near the crest of the Continental Divide on the old Oregon Trail, 60 miles northeast of Rock Springs.

In 1860 when the gold rush began, Easterners and Mid-Westerners flocked to the almost-virgin wilderness of Wyoming. Ore was found in large quantities, and the rapid influx of gold-seekers continued.

Wind All That Remains.

Gamblers, bartenders and dance hall girls followed so that by 1865 South Pass City was one of a score of rip-roaring mining towns, echoing to the clink of picks and shovels on rock, the blaring music of honkeytonk dance halls, the bark of six-shooters and the whine of the wind. The wind is all that remains to disturb the quiet of the hastily-constructed boom town.

In 1878, with the decline of metal markets, the rest of the roaring frontier communities became ghost towns. The miners, gamblers and entertainers moved on to more lucrative fields.

South Pass City, however, survived, although most of its residents departed. When modern methods were introduced in the 1920s, several large mining firms established themselves near the once-famous town to extract an estimated \$500,000 in gold ore from the surrounding hillsides.

Hung On for Time.

The little town retained its post office and place on the map while other communities of its kind were remembered only in name.

Other ghost towns of the state, some marked by a few staggering frame shacks, still others torn down by the elements and settlers, include Cambria, in northeastern Wyoming near Newcastle; Battle, south of South Pass City in the Medicine Bow National forest; Rambler, two miles south of Battle; Eadsville, atop scenic Casper mountain, and Layoye, in the Salt Creek field in Natrona county.

National Parks to Offer More Camping Facilities

SAN FRANCISCO.—Americans are rapidly becoming camping conscious, according to Julian H. Salomon, national park service camping specialist of Washington.

On a tour of the California camping sites, Salomon explained this phase of the national park service's work as follows:

"It was assumed," he said, "that there were numerous agencies in the country interested in camp operations if they could be assisted in obtaining suitable sites and facilities."

"It was also thought that smaller agencies operating camps would be able to pool their efforts if offered improved facilities to encourage better service."

"As a result, through consultation with local agencies, camp development was studied thoroughly from the viewpoint of the committee's needs. Out of these consultations came organized camping for family boys, girls, educational and other groups utilizing facilities carefully planned to provide the greatest use at a minimum cost."

Salomon said that in 1936 there were only nine camps in operation in the United States with a total of 37,310 camper days.

For 1938 these figures were increased to 49 camps with a total of 376,173 camper days.

The service expects to have at least 60 camps in operation with a probable total of 60,000 camper days for 1939.

Matrimonial Agency Is Operated From Prison

COLUMBUS, OHIO.—The operation of a matrimonial agency known as the "Idealist club," from Ohio penitentiary, was disclosed today with suspension of S. M. Current, a Bertillon officer.

Current, whose job it was to take photographs, fingerprints and measurements of prisoners, had been engaged in the matrimonial enterprise on his employers' time, Acting Warden William F. Amrine said. He was suspended 30 days.

One of Current's matrimonial circulars read:

"Our sole aim is to help you find your ideal and we do not cease in our efforts until the desired goal is reached. Send in the enclosed membership application today and let us start working for your happiness at once."

Double Play BELLINGHAM, WASH.—Outfielder Ed Stewart, of Vancouver, swung so hard at a fast one that he knocked himself out Tuesday night. He missed the ball, hit himself in the head.

Lights of New York

by L. L. STEVENSON

Not so long ago, Arthur French played before 50,000 persons. Now he often watches 50,000 persons at play. Back in 1928 he was captain of the Harvard football team and just about single-handedly defeated Yale in the traditional game. Two days after his graduation, he had a job. Punching tickets at Manhattan beach. Since then, he has done just about every chore, except chef in the kitchen about the resort.

Now he is general manager and holds the rank of vice president of the Joseph P. Day Enterprises. He married Mr. Day's daughter and lives a happy home life over in Short Hills, N. J. He still keeps up with athletics to a certain extent. Manhattan beach is two miles long. At least 10 times a day, he travels the entire length. Then, too, in his spare time, he invented a football and basketball, one-third regulation size, to train youngsters for those games when they grow up.

Instead of being stranded, vaudeville is now sanded. At least it is out at Manhattan beach. To house the week-end performances, which read like the bills of the old Palace, Mr. French has constructed a modern amphitheater with a seating capacity of 10,000. The stage resembles the Hollywood Bowl but is of original design. It has private offices and dressing rooms for the stars and a private sun porch where the artists can enjoy a day at the beach out of reach of autograph hounds. John Philip Sousa III, grandson of the great bandman, who opened the old Manhattan beach bandstand, is the band leader and he swings the marches of his famous grandsire. Recently he announced his engagement to Miss Jean MacDonald of Hazleton, Pa.

Getting back to General Manager French, the Harvard star of other days. He has still another connection with athletics. Under his supervision are 82 handball courts, 22 tennis courts, 15 basketball courts, several championship swimming pools and numerous other activities, including bridge classes.

In the opinion of Earl Robinson and Alex North, composers for the Federal theater production, "The Life and Death of an American," it is easier to compose a new song than to find an old one, especially if the latter happened to be a national hit. Among the recordings called for by the script are "Yes, We Have No Bananas," "Missouri Waltz," and "Turkey Trot."

In the first music shop visited, Robinson and North encountered a girl of about 18. She had never heard of "Yes, We Have No Bananas," but thought it was a swell title. The composers went out feeling like Rip Van Winkles.

The Columbia university library finally yielded "Yes, We Have No Bananas," but could do nothing about "Turkey Trot" or "Missouri Waltz." From the New York Public library came the sheet music of "Turkey Trot" and when the play opened, a pit orchestra had to be substituted for a gramophone. The grandmother of a member of the cast donated the "Missouri Waltz" record. Then it was learned that there was no "Over There" record. A long search disclosed one at the bottom of a pile of old records in a Ninth avenue second-hand furniture store.

In the old days, it used to be the cellar. Then it was the basement. Now, according to what I was told at the Court of Flame at the World's fair, it is the "Rumpus Room." It seems that the "Rumpus Room" is a place where you can have a lot of fun and make a lot of noise. The one at the fair has just about everything in the way of athletic apparatus except a bowling alley. And there's an easy chair and book table, too. Curiously enough, it's heated with a gas furnace. And there was a time when I was punished by being sent down to the cellar. That wasn't all there was to it, however. When I got down there I had to sort potatoes.

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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Soon Settled A stage-struck youth had pestered a manager for a hearing, and at last got one.

"Tell me," began the manager, "do you aspire to comedy or tragedy?"

"Tragedy," bleated the youth. "Well, let me hear you recite something."

Striking an exaggerated pose, the aspirant began: "To be or not to be—"

"Not to be, undoubtedly," said the manager, showing him out.

Convinced at Last An income tax repayment claim had been made for \$20, but the taxpayer had miscalculated the amount, for actually \$30 was due to him. A check for this amount was sent, and this is how he acknowledged it.

"Dear Sir,—I am now 70 years of age. At last I believe in Santa Claus."

MATTER OF SPEED



"You and Jack are fast friends, aren't you?"

"Yes, but he's faster than I am."

Misplaced Punctuality Counsel—How fast were you going at the time of this accident? Motorist—I can't remember exactly, but I was just in time for it.

Long and Short of It The well-meaning old lady looked pityingly round the cell and then addressed the convict.

"How did the police manage to catch you, my poor fellow?"

"I was too short-legged, mum."

"Dear me—and what was your crime?"

"I was too long-fingered."

Not So Fast The doctor rushed out of his study. "Get my bag at once!" he shouted.

"Why, dad," asked his daughter, "what's the matter?"

"Some fellow just phoned he can't live without me!" gasped the doctor, reaching for his hat.

His daughter breathed a sigh of relief.

"Just a moment," she said quietly. "I think that call was for me."

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organization which wants to get the most for the money sets up standards by which to judge what is offered to it, just as in Washington the government maintains a Bureau of Standards.

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CHAPTER IV

Inspector Tope and Miss Moss had found in marriage the calm happiness of middle age. The Inspector had looked all his life on violence, yet with gentle, comprehending eyes. For a score of years or more he was at the head of the Homicide Bureau at Police Headquarters, and won for himself there a reputation not soon to be forgotten. Miss Moss was in a different fashion as shrewd as he.

While they were away on their leisurely honeymoon, Clint had planned a surprise for them: There was among the properties of the Jervies Trust a one-story, six-room house sandwiched on a narrow lot in Longwood, hidden in a backwater away from the traffic arteries, with four trees on this lot, and room for a flower-garden. Dana Jervies, Clint's father, had taken his bride there thirty years ago; and he had kept it afterward for the sake of sentiment. Clara and Mat lodged in this house for a while after their marriage; and when Inspector Tope and Miss Moss came home from their honeymoon, Clint met them at the station and drove them to this familiar door.

Miss Moss, with tears of pleasure in her eyes, protested; but Clint said strongly:

"Why, of course you'll come here. This is where all the Jervies family starts housekeeping, you know. Can't go against tradition." And when she argued she was not of the Jervies family, he insisted gently:

"You're the only mother I can remember, you know."

She yielded at last, said they would stay a little while; but Clint said they should lodge here till he wanted the house for his own bride. "And that will be a long time, by all the signs," he promised.

On the morning after Clint's ride over Kenesaw Hill, he rang the bell as they were about to sit down to the breakfast Miss Moss had prepared; and Tope, in an old blue dressing-gown and slippers, the morning paper crumpled in his hand, opened the door for him.

He greeted Clint; and he called over his shoulder:

"Mrs. Tope, there's Clint for breakfast."

She appeared for a moment in the dining-room door to smile a welcome, and bade them both sit down at the table.

"Almost ready," she promised. She watched these two for a second, a deep fondness in her eyes, before she disappeared into the kitchen again. When she presently returned, with the coffee in one hand and a platter of eggs and bacon in the other, Tope said:

"Wait, Clint. Start over now." And he said to Miss Moss: "Mrs. Tope, Clint's had a curious adventure. See how it sounds to you."

And Clint told them how, driving back to town, he had overtaken a girl in her nightgown, running through the rain upon that lonely road. "Now what do you make of that?" he asked, challenging them.

Miss Moss reflected. "I know a little about that place!" she told them. "I know there are three houses, side by side. Matthew Bowdon lives in one. He's a lawyer, trust law mostly. The firm is Bowdon and Taine. Mr. Bowdon must be an old man now. Two of his grandsons are in the firm with him, and Justus Taine, his son-in-law."

Clint exclaimed: "Well, what I want to know is, who was this girl? What had frightened her?"

The Inspector got up and crossed to the telephone. "I wonder if Charley Harquail is downtown," he said.

"He might know if anything has happened out there." Charley was a reporter, and he and the Inspector were old friends. Tope called the newspaper office, and Miss Moss and Clint listened to the one-sided conversation.

When the old man turned back to the table, he was a quickening



Under the pretext of inspecting the tires, Clint looked attentively at the three houses.

her folks; and then Leaford left her, and disappeared for good and all."

He added, and his tones were somber now: "The reason Charley had all this stuff so pat, Mrs. Leaford died last night, and he'd been getting up an obit for her."

"Died?" Clint cried. "She was alive—"