

# THE SCREEN

By RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD

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Her husband was standing quite erect upon the rug, the smoking revolver in his hand. It was not to be believed. Yet there he was, his nostrils quivering with sharp intakes of breath, his eyes following some imaginary line to the screen, watching the little black hole showed above the mountain's crest—a new decoration on that field of gold.

The screen was quite unimpressive. It gave forth no motion, no sound, no sign. It stood there as it always stood through days of happy life in the home of two young lovers. It said nothing.

At any second that dipped down and touched their destinies with the top of a butterfly's wing of time; she knew also that the personality it had assumed might never speak again. She found herself whispering within the exact words that her husband was going to say, and he said those exact words:

"What have I done?"

He was brushing his forehead with the back of his left hand, and then he started at the gold and green of those lacquer framed panels just as Amy herself stared with unbleak eyes.

Then as if they were those of a messenger sent from far-off worlds through the night, the fingers of the winter cold came and touched her lightly on the bare throat. She felt the almost imperceptible stirrings within the exact words that her husband was going to say, and he said those exact words:

"Wait!" she exclaimed.

"What have I done?" he said, and, clutching the top of the black lacquer frame, he threw the screen aside. It waited about, and, closing its panels, toppled onto the rug.

"What are you looking at?" asked her husband.

"Nothing."

He wet his lips and said, "It was your imagination, Amy."

As he stood up stretching his arms as one rising in the morning and yawning, she realized that the split of fire from the screen, the snarl and bark and roar would topple him over on the rug and spread out from beneath his fattened body. But she answered him with the volition of surprise.

"My imagination?"

"Yes—that the screen moved."

"Screen?"

"Yes, the screen," he said. "It did not move, though one might have imagined that it moved."

She laughed hysterically.

"We're a bit nervous," her husband said, looking at her with narrowed eyelids.

"No, no, Cam, I'm not nervous."

"I think so. You ought to have a taste of brandy, Amy."

Her nails scratched on the fabric of the chair arms as she said said dully, "We have no brandy."

"Oh, yes, I've my own secrets, old girl. I've a little stowed away here in the desk."

He turned his back on the screen and went leisurely toward the old mahogany desk in the corner. When he had pulled out the lower drawer at the side he fumbled within, clattering about among odds and ends.

"Hello!" he said.

"What?"

"It's gone!"

"The brandy?"

"Yes."

"If you had it, no one could have taken it, dear."

"He did."

"Who?"

"That man."

She darted a look at the screen.

"Hah!"

Her husband had caught her she knew it. She started to rise and fell back limply, her arms dangling beside the chair.

"Well, Amy, shall we give him a chance, eh?"

"There's nobody!"

He grinned with an ugly showing of his teeth. She had seen for the first time the rising from within of that universal elemental force that mankind buries under layer and layer of routine, manners, restraints.

"I'll give him a chance," he said, his face reddened and tense. "You talk to him, Amy. You tell him what I say."

"There's nobody!"

"Say to him these words, 'Come out here, you sneaking coward.'"

"No—please, Cam! No!"

He leaned back against the desk, half sitting on it, his hands behind him still grinning.

"Say it."

"You don't believe me—there's nobody there!"

"Then why not say it?"

"Come out from the screen, you sneaking coward," she said with faltering voice as if she expected to hear a pistol shot punctuate each word.

The screen gave forth no sign.

"He's there," said her husband, with his head thrust forward toward the screen. "He's afraid! So that's the kind of man you're shielding, Amy? Why, my God, don't you see—you've both confessed now?"

The sentence broke into the hoarseness of agony, the peculiar crackle of life and happiness crumbling, toppling over, crashing down.

"Trust me, Cam!" she begged.

"All right," he said. "You're on my side, Amy. Shall I kill him?"

"Kill him?"

"With this?"

She twisted her gaze away from the gold and lacquer, and then saw that her husband had not engaged in his pretended search for brandy in vain. She believed at once he had done the one thing necessary to end him; he held a revolver in his fist, boring the air with it, as if finding a way for its muzzle to lengthen out until it would touch the golden screen.

"Come out, you dog!" he roared.

"I'll give you a chance. Come out!"

The screen was silent.

"Well, Amy, which is the panel—the first, where the white stork is—the second, with the water and the mountain? Is he a tall man, or a short one? I allow for his crouching."

"For God's sake, Cam! He'll—"

"Ha! So you want to save him—you love him, eh? You! My Amy!"

He raised the point of the revolver above his ear and brought the muzzle down slowly as one at target practice.

"My Amy," he repeated ironically, and suddenly, in a chaos of passion, he crouched, grinding his teeth together, filled with the fierce and terrible joys of that poised moment.

She shut her eyes.

A shot crashed into the world of her nerves, tearing some gigantic hole as if her senses had woven a fabric only to willfully pull it to shreds with a thousand rough claws struck into it at once.

For a moment she stood still, not daring to look. She could feel in her nostrils the tang of the smoke that had filled the room, and she opened her eyes slowly in terrible fear.

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The following lectures will be given: Oct. 28, "Bird Banding in the United States," by Dr. J. A. Rehn; Oct. 29, "Bird Banding in the United States," by Dr. J. A. Rehn; Oct. 30, "Bird Banding in the United States," by Dr. J. A. Rehn.

On The Minute Service

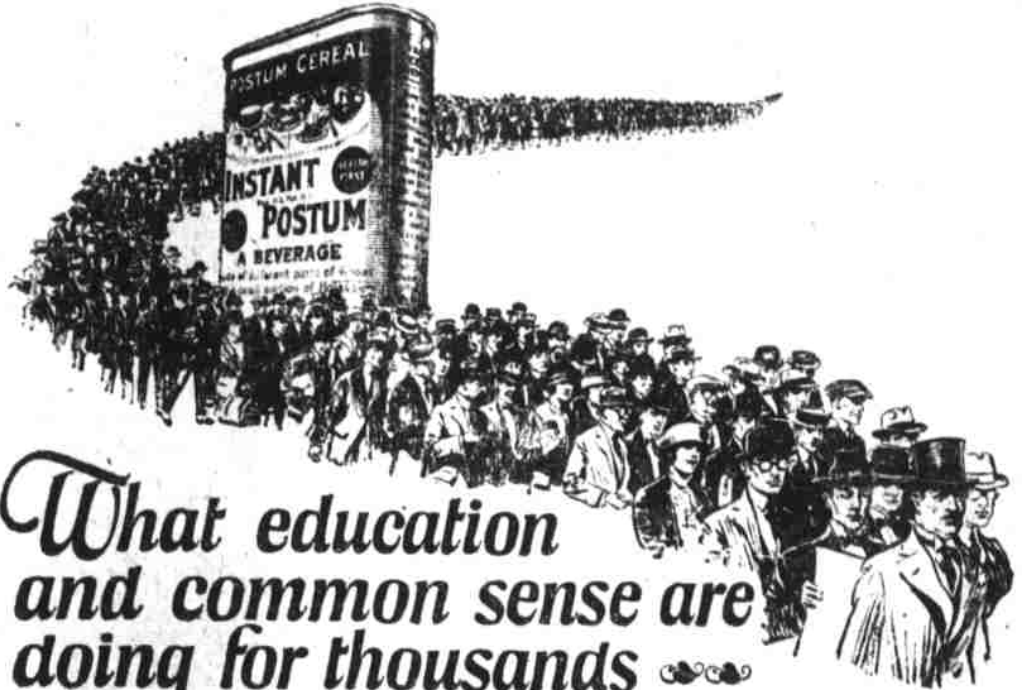
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"Black-Draught relieves the swelling, or lightness, in the head."

"It relieves the heavy feeling after meals, which indicated to me it was good for indigestion."

"So I keep Black-Draught in the house and use it for colds, headache, sour stomach and torpid liver. I have told my friends, and they use it also."

"My present health is improved wonderfully."

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Ask your druggist for Black-Draught liver medicine. See that the package label bears the name, "Black-Draught."—Adv.

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There is no disease more offensive or disagreeable, or no disease that will lead to as much serious trouble as catarrh. You can now get rid of it by a simple, safe, and pleasant home remedy discovered by Dr. Blosser, a catarrh specialist.

Dr. Blosser's Remedy is composed of medicinal herbs, flowers and berries, which you smoke in a dainty pipe or cigarette. The smoke effect is soothing and healing, and is entirely harmless. It contains no cubes or tobacco, and may be used by women and children as well as men.

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14	Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, Washington	11:25 a.m.
15	Atlanta, Spartanburg and local stations	11:45 a.m.
16	Murphy and local stations	12:10 p.m.
17	Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, Knoxville, Savannah, Jacksonville, Salisbury and Richmond	12:30 p.m.
18	Murphy, local stations, Columbia and Charleston	12:50 p.m.
19	Goldens, Raleigh, local stations and Knoxville	1:05 p.m.
20	Washington, Richmond, Norfolk and local stations	1:25 p.m.
21	Morrisville and Knoxville	1:50 p.m.
22	Local stations to Spartanburg and Columbia	2:00 p.m.
23	Washington Special, Raleigh and Goldens	2:10 p.m.
24	Carolina Special, Spartanburg, Columbia and local stations	2:20 p.m.
25	Murphy and local stations	2:25 p.m.
26	Murphy and local stations	2:30 p.m.
27	New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Cincinnati	2:30 p.m.
28	Carolina Special, Cincinnati, Chicago, Louisville and Washington	2:50 p.m.
29	Carolina Special, Cincinnati, Chicago, Louisville and Washington	3:00 p.m.