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BY JOHN E. BARRETT.

Presently a man, who seemed to be in a great hurry, and who crossed the vacant lots from the untraveled portion of the lower side, where a heap of coal lay, turned into the slope, and hurried down into the mine as rapidly as the darkness would permit.

CHAPTER XIX. THE BLACK-DAMP OF DEATH.

THE appearance of the wealthy and beautiful Zaida Carson in the humble home of Noel Edwards was a surprise to Edith; but great as was Edith's astonishment over such an unlooked-for visit, Zaida was even more amazed at finding Detective Sawyer there.

Zaida, who was most kind at heart, noticed Edith's embarrassment, and promptly hastened to repair her mistake. "Excuse me," she said, "if the question has given you offense, it was an impulsive one, and asked for a purpose, which I don't mind explaining to you."

"Yes," she said, "this was written by Clarence, but how could that man Sawyer get hold of it? Surely there is some trap connected with this."

"Yes, but, as I firmly believe in my inmost soul, wrongfully. He is incapable of such infamy. Still, as you are his wife, it is but right that you should know all."

"This is a strange puzzle," said Zaida, who was sadly perplexed. "Clarence claims you as his wife, and holds certificate to that effect. Judge Ransom, who performed the ceremony, corroborates his claim, and yet you deny it all. The facts are all against you, and yet if you consented at any time to such a marriage you ought to remember it. Can it be possible that you were married in a trance? Do you remember all that took place while you were at Dawson's?"

"I cannot remember a great deal that occurred there. I was unconscious when taken there, and I remained so for some time, I suppose. I do recall distinctly, however, that I met your cousin; that he followed me along the corridor, calling out that I was his wife, and I succeeded in evading him because I thought he must be drunk or insane. My next recollection was that I was placed in a carriage by force, and was about to be carried away somewhere, when my father happened upon the scene and saved me."

"You are indeed a wild and peculiar creature. It amazes me the more I learn about it, and I am at a loss what to think. It's not possible that there may be some villainy at the bottom of the entire affair, of which neither you nor my cousin can have any cognizance? It seems so to me, and I am more than half convinced that you are both the victims of a conspiracy that is engineered by some desperate people. Is it not possible that those who entrapped you into this alliance with my cousin, or of whom you seem to know nothing, are the same persons that robbed and assaulted my father? Can you not recall some of the faces and the incidents at Dawson's? What kind of people did you see there? Do you know anything of my cousin's connection with them?"

She found Edith Edwards in darkness, consulting the younger children, who were clinging about her in terror. The little lamp that occupied a place on the shaky center-table in the parlor had been smashed into fragments by the great shock.

Zaida Carson paused at the door, fearing lest some disaster had occurred with the sound of Edith's musical voice and hopeful words, as she heard her saying: "Children, dear, have courage. The God that guards us when the sun is shining will not desert us in the darkness and the storm."

In a few minutes another lamp was obtained. The house was still shaking perceptibly from the effects of the shock. Presently the street was filled with people, whose excited cries mingled in a wild chorus that rose high above the rumbling sound of the dying storm.

CHAPTER XX. A MULTITUDINOUS STORM. HEN Tom Eckert lifted the lamp that was to guide him down the steep slope leading into the depths of the Carson coal mine, he little knew that two pairs of keen eyes were eagerly watching him, and least of all the eyes of Detective Sawyer and Sam Sharp, the newboys.

The mine had been idle since the great steel mill was dismantled, because its supply of coal was used mainly for the purpose of keeping that establishment going, and Eckert firmly believed that there was not a human being in the place but himself.

character of the papers that the confidential book-keeper took from the floor of the mine, there was an absence of those sinister flashes of blue flame which had been caused by contact with the light. The volatile gases rose to the roof of the mine, and there accumulated rapidly until a great volume was formed, which was capable of causing death and destruction.

Eckert had been in the mines many a time, with visitors who were the guests of Mr. Carson, and he had seen expert miners ignite the gas that rushed through some fissure in the coal, without incurring any particular danger thereby, so that he was not particularly alarmed at the fantastic streaks of light that danced about him. He took his time, therefore, in examining the valuable papers which the book-keeper had so bravely placed in his hands.

"That's impossible," said Sam, "we must have light." At that moment there was a burst of light in the mine that fairly dazzled Sam Sharp and the detective, and looking back they saw Eckert standing in the midst of a sheet of flame, as if transfixed with terror.

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feeble flicker of a mine-lamp was seen emerging from the slope. In less than a minute the news flew around that some of the workmen were in the mine, and Sawyer and Sam Sharp had some difficulty in trying to allay the apprehensions of those who pressed around them in inquiry. Their appearance was unexpected, and they were immediately piled with all sorts of inquiries.

In reply to the numerous questions addressed to them, Sawyer said: "Gentlemen, this is no time for tedious details. A party of visitors were reckless enough to venture into the mine, and one of their number was caught under the crash, where he still remains in great agony. We were unable to assist him, and we decided to come out for help. Who will volunteer to go down the slope with me to the rescue of this man?"

"I will! I will!" came from a dozen voices, and the eager volunteers pressed forward to the mouth of the slope where Sawyer and Sam Sharp stood. The detective was anxious to reach Tom Eckert alive, for reasons of his own, and so he urged the relief corps that accompanied himself and Sam Sharp to make all possible speed. Sawyer, as a shrewd detective, knew the value of getting at his man before the latter lost consciousness, if such a thing were possible.

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"I'm afraid it ain't worth while," said Sam. "It is best to know definitely, and besides there may be something in that box that we want very badly. Let us go back."

CHAPTER XXII. THE DISCOVERY. A new crematory factory was tried the other day in Jacksonville, Fla. The result of the first hour's work was highly satisfactory. Twelve barrels of night soil, five barrels of garbage, one barrel of chickens, one barrel of spoiled fish, four dogs, one box of meat, four alligators and five loads of refuse matter, including street sweepings, etc., two of these being double loads, making in all 7,800 pounds, were burned. All this was accomplished with the use of less than a quarter of a cord of wood, as a large portion of the refuse was of such a nature that it furnished its own fuel, and all that was left at the end of an hour was less than a pound of ashes.

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CHAPTER XXIII. THE FIRST APPLE PAIR. Eve was the first apple woman. Adam inaugurated the early clothing movement. Adam's second son was the first Abel-bodied man on record.

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