THREE SHUTTERED HOUSES

. By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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THE STORY

CHAPTER L-Driving home through a Surrential rain, young, well-to-do Clint Services picks up a girl, scantily clad, manning in terror-stricken flight down the stad. She rides a short ways, leaves the case and runs into the woods. He de-cides to talk to his dear friends, Inspec-der Tope and Miss Moss, about his ad-venture. Clint still thinks of her as Miss Moss, his former guardian, though she and the Inspector are married. Clint, Entwing settled down, now manages the Services estate himself.

CHAPTER II. - In three shuttered "CHAPTER II. - In three shuttered "meases, all gloomy and forbidding, on Moneseaw Hill, near where Clint picked up the frightened girl, lived three fami-ties. In one house lived old Denman Glurder, his wife, who had been Ella Kenesaw, and his daughter. Kitty Lea-second house was Aunt Evic Taloc. Un-cie Justus and brothers Rab and Ass. The third held old Matthew Bowdon and big wife. Living on the estate was a "mean known only to June as "Uncle Just" Following their usual custom the Gree families gathered in the Hurder "Bowe families gathered series with a headache. "Bowe families gathered series with a headache."

"CHAPTER III. --Strangely upset. June short stiully, and in the middle of the middle went in is see her mother. Her "moomfortable position warned June that don't mother was not sleeping. She was food. Panks stricken, June ran from the press, out the unlocked door, and into the storm to get Doctor Cabler. It was "more that Clint Jervies picked her up. (Continued from last week)

The girl opened the cabinet and it out a familiar bottle. The botthe had no label. She removed the work and lot one tablet roll into her ma. She set the bettle down on the edge of the basin and was about replace the cork when Kitty Lea-Good called:

"June, I'll take two tonight. I want to go to sleep quickly, sleep

June made an unhappy gesture, and ber hand touched the uncorked bottle. It fell into the basin, spilling tablets. She rescued it hastily. There was still a little water in the sin, and the spilled tablets were andy half-dissolved. There were three remaining in the bottle.

June stood in some consternation, and her mother called:

"What was that? June, did you ma them?"

"I tipped over the bottle." June confessed. "I spilled one or two." "For heaven's sake, be careful," Kitty Leaford cried fretfully. "Doc-

tor Cabler always cross-examines

June undressed slowly, listlessly. There was nothing in life as she knew it which could provoke her to eagerness. Her movements were automatic, her thoughts went round and round a familiar circle.

CHAPTER III

This was her world. These folk who had been here tonight, and Uncle Jim, who lived in the hut by the pond. She thought of him now with a faint smile. There was sound mirth in him. He used to laugh at ! these people here; contrived nicknames for them all to make June smile. Grandma Bowdon was the Iron Hand, Aunt Evie the Velvet Glove. Grandma and Grandpa Hurder wore the Conquered Provinces. He never sought to make June laugh at her mother, she remembered now. Once or twice she had tried to persuade Kitty Leaford to go with her to meet Uncle Jim. "You'd like him, Mother," she had urged. "I know you would."

But her mother would never go. The girl went mechanically about the business of preparing for the night. Her eyes drifted half-resentfully around the ugly room. She loosed her hair and brushed it slowly for a while, watching her reflection in the mirror above the marble slab. The house long since was still. When at last she turned out her own light and opened one of the tall windows, she saw Aunt Evie's house next door was dark and silent too. Also she saw, far off, a flicker in the sky; she even heard the rumble of thunder. Yet the storm might

not come this way, or if it did, her mother might not waken. She got into the big bed and lay without drawing any covering over her, for the night was hot, and the air was lifeless and still. The old house creaked all around her; mice scurried in the walls.

She must have slept at last, and for an indeterminate time. It was a gust of wind which woke her, a sudden quickening in the tempo of the night. Then lightning etched a net of flame across the sky, and the crashing thunderstroke burst in her

June was not afraid of thundershowers; but her mother, despite the drug she had taken, might have waked; June decided to go in and see. She knew the older woman would be, if she were awake, cowering now, and crying out as though from an actual physical pain. The girl got out of bed and crossed the hall to her mother's door.

Without opening the door, she listened, but she heard no sound from within. Yet still June hesitated, uncertain, uneasy for no reason. In the end she opened the door and spoke softly into the darkness. "Mother, are you all right?"

But there was no reply, and June was reassured. She was about to return to her own room, when lightning flashed again, close by, and the glare of it was bright in the window by Kitty Leaford's bed. So June saw her mother for this in-

stant, clearly. And when the lightning passed, dren. He will also attend the 27th ing in her mother's posture, in the way she lay along the bed.



.... offered her his coat, but she refused it. Then this young man | United States reached a new high beside her turned out the dash-light so that darkness drew a protective garment over her, and she was warm with gratitude to him. She youths have been trained in this said: "Thank you-" She watched him covertly, controlling her breath. He asked some question, suggesting that she was afraid, and she told him that she was not afraid. Yct her knees were trembling and her fingers pressed her palms.

He spoke again, but she did not hear him. She watched the road, and at the beginning of the path through the wood to Doctor Cabler's house, she bade this young man stop the car. He did so, and she alighted, and ran away along the path.

But hidden in the wood, she stopped to look back; and she stayed there till he drove on, watching the headlights of his car till their gleam was lost behind a screen of trees.

When he was gone, she stood like one bereft, as though with him a part of herself had departed too. But then, in the darkness and the rain, terror returned to spur her on. She ran up the path and so came pounding on the Doctor's door.

At length a flashlight's beam came down the stairs; she could see it through the panel of the door. It struck her in the eyes through the glass; and at the same time the door opened. The light was in her eyes, and Doctor Cabler exclaimed: "June! God bless me!" She whispered:

"Come quick, Doctor Cabler!"

"Come in, June," he commanded, and led her into the hall and shut the door. "You're drenched. What is it?"

"Oh, hurry, hurry!" she cried. She might have roused Rab or "It's Mother. She's dead!" Asa, asleep next door. Rab had even a car. But she took no time to

The word on her own lips struck her like a blow. She had not till this moment shaped this word even in her thoughts. "Oh, hurry," she repeated; and thought in a dispassionate apathy that the injunction was absurd. If her mother was dead, there could be no reason for haste. This had not occurred to her before.

"Eh?" the Doctor exclaimed. "Dead?"

"Yes," said June, in an empty tone. Even though the admission convicted her of folly, convicted her of having lost her wits, of having run without the slightest occasion half a mile through drenching rain, yet she had no doubt that what she sald was true. Kitty Leaford was dead. Of this,

now, June was sure.

(To Be Continued)

be back in the office Wednesday morning.

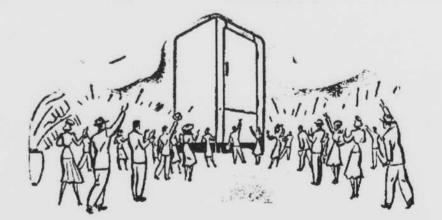
J. A. Best, Supt. Public Welfare, Wayne County, went to Gastonia Sunday to take two crippled chilGIFTS

J. C. Eagles of Wilson has dothe girl stood still, her eyes dilated. Annual convention of the North nated one registered Holstein bull There had been something alarm- Carolina Conference of Social Ser- calf, one registered Guernsey vice, in Charlotte, which convenes calf, and one registered Guernsey Sunday night and runs through bull calf to 4-H Club boys of Wilson county. Delmon Williamson of the Tuesday. Mrs. Rutledge and Mrs. Campen. Rock Ridge 4-H Club received the from the Department of Public Wel- Holstein bull calf. The other two fare, accompanied him. They will animals will be placed later.

Thursday, April 27, 1939

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was not habituated to encounter strange man. But instantly, while he used some persuasion, she found hegself in the seat beside him. He ATTEND MEETING

Then the electric light faded

by the blackness; she gasped for

breath; and the front door blew

open, banging against the wall, and

She was swept by desperate and

nameless terror; a gust of rain

came sweeping in, and June ran

blindly to meet it, out through the

door, into the full beat of the rain.

The touch of it was sweet and cool.

Then she remembered that the

front door was always locked and

bolted. Uncle Justus had bolted it

tonight. Why had it opened of it-

Blind panic possessed her utterly;

yet she clung to one thought: she

think of these things. She was al-

ready racing across the lawn; she

found the gate in the hedge, and felt

the smooth hard macadam under

her feet, and ran swiftly. Occa-

sionally lightning flashes illumined

She had gone halfway to Doctor

Cabler's house when a car came down the hill behind her. She tried

to run faster, to escape this pur-

suer: but this was vain, and she

turned off the road, and fell, and

scrambled to her feet and stood like

The car stopped beside her, and

She stammered something, for

this was a man's voice, and June

a wild creature brought to bay.

someone asked a question.

her way, kept her in the road.

must fetch Doctor Cabler.

the girl choked back a scream.

and died.

self?

me when they go faster than he thinks they should. Bring me two." June took one more tablet out of

the bottle, so that she had two in for hand, while two remained. She port the bottle in its place and went back into the other room. She said:

"Mother, I wish you wouldn't take bem both. You remember what Suppened that other time?"

"I took three that time," her conother retorted. "Two won't hurt THE.

"You were awfully sick!"

"I must get to sleep," Kitty Lea-Eard insisted. She picked up the tab-Bets from her daughter's palm and thropped them in the warm milk. The waited a moment to give them These to dissolve. "These are harm-June," she urged. "Practically! And they do make me sleep." She laughed feverishly. "Twice "his many wouldn't really hurt me, Her eyes were haggard. June." "And I can't help it. If I don't manep, I go mad."

She drained the draft. "That does Gaste strong," she said with a faint srimace. "Now run, baby. Kiss me, and go. I'll be asleep in a minute.

June kissed her, made her lie fown, covered her over. She opened one window a crack. Kitty Leaford was not a fresh-air addict. June looksd at her and saw that she was already half asleep. The girl terrond off the light and slipped T.W.RT

che the head of the stairs she researed long enough to be sure the schers were leaving. She heard someone slide the bolt on the front or, heard Uncle Justus say: "Tye fastened it, Denman."

Then murmuring voices toward the kitchen. They all went out that way; and after a moment Grandpa and Grandma Hurder returned to se into their own room, on the ad floor, in the east wing. Her ther's room and her own were in the west wing, over the big sitting-

A deep upeasiness possessed June. Then her own door was closed and she was alone, she stood still, even e eyes unmoving. It might be, make thought, the sullen electric air which made her thus restless and This of a vague foreboding.

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With an abrupt movement June turned on the light. An air-current coming from the open window in her own room blew her door shut with a reverberating crash: and she leaped with dismay at the sudden sound. But her mother had not roused-did not move as June bent

over the bed. Mrs. Leaford lay on her side, her head pillowed on her left arm; her right arm limp along the coverlets. June had seen her in a drugged sleep before, and there was nothing patently alarming in her appearance now. But though her mother lay on her side, her head was turned so that her face was upward. The posture looked uncomfortable; and June very gently tried to move her mother's head to the left so that it might be at ease.

But when June touched Kitty Leaford's cheek smeared with unguents, her heart turned cold.

June caught her mother's shoulders. She shook them; she cried: "Mother! Mother!"

But Kitty Leaford made no response. June might as well have shaken a bolster loosely stuffed with sand

The girl backed away from the bed, her hands pressed to her lips. She turned and ran down the stairs to the telephone in the hall.

The instrument was dead. She snapped on the hall light-an electric bulb hanging by one wire in the midst of the gas chandelierand in that naked illumination she tried the telephone again, without response.

Terror was clamoring in her; she tried to fight it down, to think what she should do.

Grandpa and Grandma Hurder were asleep at the end of the hall, but she knew there was no help in them. Even if there were help anywhere

Then the electric light faded and died, and June stood in the dark hall like a tomb. She was stifled

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