

Professional Brethern... GEORGE E. WALSH

thing before I could decide upon the first step. "It's my business," I added. Then continuing I said in a low voice: "But Mr. Goddard is not the only one concerned in these robberies. There is another and I think a more dangerous neighbor who is implicated in the crime. But he is too wary to be caught easily. He directs the whole matter, but keeps in the background. He must be caught at least and punished if Mr. Goddard is to suffer. It would be a sin to let him escape and the lesser criminal punished."

CHAPTER XIX.

With the danger of exposure of my master removed, I returned home with a lighter heart. I recalled there in the lunch served to him. He had not noticed my absence, and I congratulated myself upon a shrewd piece of work. I had at last determined to bring matters to a climax. It was two days after this before I got the opportunity to call upon Miss Stetson. I wanted to redeem my promise made on the day of her horseback accident. I had learned through an accident that Dr. Squires would be away on Tuesday and that he would not return until late at night. I did not know what his mission was or where he was going. All that concerned me was that he would be absent, and the house would be left in charge of his old servant.

ten to him, for, knowing what he was, I thought anything was fair enough for him, and I played the eavesdropper. The portieres between the parlor and library were drawn, and through their thick folds I could just catch the words of the two. The first words of the doctor informed me that I had reached the place at a critical moment. "Miss Belle, you do me injustice to say that I do not like pleasant surroundings and that I am not like other men in my tastes. No man appreciates a home more than I do." "I did not mean to insinuate that, doctor," Miss Stetson replied. "I merely said that I thought it so strange you should like to live in that old deserted, haunted mansion." "I do not like to live there. It was not a matter of choice with me. I was poor and had to in order to carry out my experiments."

and out whether my request will be granted. "Your request? What is it?" Her mind was still dwelling upon the interview that had just closed, and the purport of my words had hardly attracted her attention. "Oh, I see," she added a moment later, with the faintest indication of a smile on her face. "You have come to ask me to fulfill my promise of the other day."



Then you will not grant my request. But you will find in the end it will be for your own good.

"I had not learned what Dr. Squires' mission was in leaving the mansion on Tuesday afternoon and evening, but I concluded that it had something to do with his prospective fortune, and this fortune, I felt reasonably certain, consisted solely of the stolen goods which had accumulated in his house. He had evidently reached the point where he thought it advisable to ship them away to some more convenient place where they could be disposed of to advantage. It would be comparatively easy to send them off by express to some distant city and melt up the silver pieces and sell the metal for what it would bring. While he was making arrangements to escape with his unlawful goods I was planning to capture him and rob him of his sole title to a fortune. I did not doubt but he would take the lion's share of the spoils, leaving my master only a small portion, or probably he would at the last moment escape without dividing at all with him. He was capable of such a trick. Shortly after dusk on Tuesday I approached the old mansion on foot. I had made sure of the doctor's disappearance. I saw him get on the train about noon and leave for the city. As soon as it was dark I approached the house and looked through the kitchen windows. The old Indian servant was alone and seemed to be busily engaged in cooking his supper. When I had made sure of this, I hurried around to the front piazza and began to climb the post which had once before served me a similar good turn. Knowing the way well, I made quick work in climbing on the roof of the house, and I reached the cupola without mishap. Here I found everything as I had left it during my previous visit. I opened the window without difficulty and proceeded to lift the trap door in the floor. The lock had not been tampered with, and nobody had ever been the wiser for my first visit. In a few moments I found my way down the ladder and stood in the upper hall. The house was wrapped in darkness, except for the light in the kitchen. This all helped to make my plan easier. I descended the front stairs noiselessly, and through the half open door I could catch a glimpse of the old servant. From this position I could measure his probable strength and powers. It was necessary that I should be able to cope successfully with him, and I was not going to run any risk. For some time I watched his slow movements about the kitchen. He prepared his supper and ate it in silence. Then when he proceeded to wash the dishes I found that it was getting late, and for the success of my plan it would be necessary to expedite matters. I purposely dropped a heavy book in the front hall and then glided quickly behind the office portieres. The noise, as I expected, attracted the old man from his work, and he came catlike into the hall, peering intently ahead of him. He did not expect to find any one in the house. The noise sounded as if it proceeded from the front piazza. The old man glanced through the plate glass of the front door before he opened it. This was my opportunity. I sprang out of the darkness and landed plump upon the man's back, carrying him to the floor by my weight.

When I left him, locking the door and windows securely, and returned to the scene of our recent struggle. I lit a lamp long enough to give me an opportunity to clean up things which the doctor returned home. Leaving a dim light burning in the kitchen, I took the front door key with me and stepped out into the cool night air. "So far so good," I said to myself. It was then half past 8, and I had half an hour in which to reach the Stetson mansion in time to meet my appointment. CHAPTER XXII. WAS at Miss Stetson's promptly at 9 o'clock. Mr. Jaimson was waiting there for me, and Miss Stetson was all prepared for her strange journey. "I don't like this at all," she said, biting her lip. "I don't know whether to regard it as a joke or not." "It is not a joke," Mr. Jaimson replied seriously. "I fear it is far from it." "Why not tell me all, then? I don't like mysteries." "It is for him to tell you," he answered, pointing toward me. "Knowing that he took me for a detective, I answered evasively: 'We'll soon be there, Miss Stetson, and then you will know all.' I led them a brisk walk down the old highway until we reached the ground surrounding the old mansion. When I turned to go up to the house, Mr. Jaimson started and exclaimed: 'Is it Dr. Squires?' I nodded affirmatively and increased my pace. 'Of course this is where Dr. Squires lives, but what of that?' inquired Miss Stetson, looking from one to the other. 'Neither of us made reply, but trudged on in gloomy silence. Without any formality or explanation I produced the key and opened the front door of the old house. I went inside and lighted the hall lamp. Then as they followed me I closed the door. 'Dr. Squires is not at home tonight,' said Miss Stetson, 'and I do not see why we should enter his house in this way. Where did you get the key and where is his old servant?' 'One thing at a time, Miss Stetson,' I replied. 'I will explain everything in a few moments. Please be seated in the hall until I light more lamps.' I left them in the hallway while I bounded up the stairs to see if the old servant was all right. I unlocked the room and glanced in. He was propped up in the same attitude on the bed, and his bandages were secure. I closed and locked the door and I turned then to the treasure room. I put two or three extra lights in this place, placing them so that the rays would glister on the silverware and jewels. I drew off all the coverings of the stolen goods and even arranged many of them so they would show off to the best advantage. With the lights shining down upon them they made a feast for the eyes that was dazzling. It was a spectacular effect that gratified my little vanity. I returned to the hall, where I had left my two companions, and said: 'I will accompany you upstairs, I will make all this mystery plain.' They both eagerly followed me, even Miss Stetson showing more than her ordinary curiosity. She preceded Mr. Jaimson, and as she reached the door of the room I threw it open and said: 'Behold, Miss Stetson, Dr. Squires' secret! Here is the mystery which he has safely guarded from you and all the people around here.' She stepped into the room, shaded her eyes with one hand and then stepped back with a little cry of amazement. 'What does this all mean? What beautiful things? Where did they come from?' 'Examine some of them, Miss Stetson,' I said. 'Look at this handsome silver teapot and water pitcher.' She stepped forward and took them out of my hand and then nearly dropping them in her agitation. 'Why, they are mine! They have my mother's initials on them. They are the ones stolen from my house.' 'Yes, they belong to you, and if you will look around you will see plenty of others that you may recognize—not only those which belonged to you, but to your neighbors.' She picked up one after another, handling them with such eagerness that she nearly dropped them. Then she turned helpless toward me and Mr. Jaimson. 'What does it mean, Mr. Jaimson?' she asked in a trembling voice. 'That we have at last run the robbers to earth,' he replied sternly. 'Who are they?' she gasped while her face turned white and red. 'Not surely not Dr.—' 'Yes, Miss Stetson, I fear Dr. Squires' 'It can't be. How could he do such a thing? I—I—don't understand it.' She leaned against the wall for support. Mr. Jaimson put his arm around her waist. 'You must not give way to your feelings,' he said tenderly. 'You must be brave. There is more to do tonight. We must tell you the whole story, and you must be equal to the emergency. It is difficult.' I interrupted him by touching his arm. The sound of wheels on the gravelly drive had attracted my attention. 'Somebody is coming,' I said. 'Go down to the office. I will follow you.' I turned the lights out quickly, locked the door and bounded down the stairs two at a time. Had the doctor unexpectedly returned earlier than he had promised? When I reached the office, I shoved open into a closet shut off from the rest of the room with soft, shabby curtains. The place was barely large enough for all of us to squeeze in. I placed my revolver at his temple as I spoke to emphasize my words. He looked frightened and shook his head.



I had grasped his two arms.

As we fell together I had grasped his two arms and held them securely locked behind him. For a moment he was so frightened by this sudden attack that he did not struggle, but when he felt me running a rope around his elbows and wrists he summoned all of his strength and fought desperately. I had not underestimated his strength. He was thin and lithe, but powerful and sly. He was like a serpent in his wriggling, and I had the greatest difficulty in the world to hold him. We struggled and scuffled about the hall floor for ten minutes before I could tame him. Once or twice I felt that the battle was going against me, but I renewed my efforts and finally plied his arms behind him with the rope. With his arms securely tied the man gave up the struggle and lay there panting and trying to speak. I saw that he was really dumb, although not deaf. He could not speak, but he could hear. 'Be quiet now, and I shall not hurt you,' I said in answer to the question which I could plainly read in his eyes. 'I'm not going to harm you; only you must submit to being bound for the rest of the night. I will make you as comfortable as possible.' I picked him up and carried him upstairs. After placing him in an easy position on the bed I tied him securely to the posts, running the ropes round and round his body and the bed. He looked more like a bandaged mummy than a living being when I had finished. 'Now, you'll remain there until I call for you,' I said. 'If I catch you attempting to escape, I'll shoot you.' I placed my revolver at his temple as I spoke to emphasize my words. He looked frightened and shook his head.

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