

THE HUMAN SPHINX

by Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KE. MATSON

What's happened before—
Simon Judd, amateur detective, and William Dart, an undertaker, are visiting John Drane, eccentric man of wealth, at the Drane place. Suddenly the household is shocked to find that John Drane has been murdered. The dead man is first seen by Josie, the maid, then by Amy Drane and Simon Judd. The latter faints.

Police officers call and investigations begin. Dr. Blessington is called, and after seeing the murdered John Drane, makes the astounding revelation to Amy Drane that her "uncle" is not a man but a woman.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"Yes, Dr. Blessington made the examination; victim dead several hours, cause of death stab wound to heart. Suicide theory untenable, Dick, because the old lady couldn't have used so much strength. And there ain't no knife around, either, Dick. She's been murdered, all right. Well, the queer part is she's this old John Drane that's been living here, see? He was a she all the time; wouldn't it jar you?"

Yes, Hang around, I'll just take a look or two."
He went to the bed and looked down at the victim of the murder and, turning, surveyed the room. He walked across the floor and opened the door of the closet. Here hung many suits of men's garments, on proper hangers each on its own hook, while a dozen pairs of shoes stood in a neat row on the floor. He stood on a chair and examined the shelf, taking down several hats, looking into each and noting the makers' marks in them. He moved the hanging clothes and tapped on the inner wall of the closet.

His next act was to open the door leading into John Drane's private bath. Here the walls were tiled to the height of a man and the porcelain tub was built in, as was the shower. The whole was immaculately white, as was the wall above the tile and the ceiling. On a glass shelf stood the few toilet articles any man might use—a safety razor in its gold-plated case, talcum, bay rum, and so on. There was no opening out of the room except the door into the bedroom and a narrow window the lower part of which was in leaded glass.

"The door wasn't locked, huh?" Brennan asked.
"No. This maid Josie came up to call the old lady and when nobody answered she opened the door and fainted. Door couldn't have been locked. It don't look like the old lady was expected to be killed, Dick, does it?"

"Nothing stolen out of here that you've heard of?"
"Not that I know of," the officer

said. "We didn't ask. We waited for you."

"All right!" Brennan said, going to the door, "I'm through here, I guess. You better telephone the coroner, Henry, and Joe—you look around for a knife or something. You might keep your hands off anything smooth, in case of fingerprints. Reach in under the mattress and around and anywhere you think a knife might be. Sometimes these killers shove things in under when they get a panic. I'm going down. What did you say the girl's name was that saw in here first?"

"Josie. But she ain't downstairs. She's in that room across the hall. She's got a weak heart and they took her in there to bring her to. There's an old dame with her—the house-keeper."

"I'll see them," Brennan said. His interview with Josie in Amy's room yielded him, however, nothing we do not already know.

"And you?" Brennan demanded of the maid Zella.

"I don't know anything," Zella said, "I was down in the kitchen along with George—he's the chauffeur—and Maggie Maney, the cook, and we heard Josie screaming and heard her fall. So we came up as quick as we could. She was fainted on the floor, and Mr. Judd, too—"

"Mr. Judd? Fainted?" Brennan
"He's a visitor, a friend of Mr. Drane's, I guess. He come last night and stayed over. He saw the blood and fainted."

"He reached the room before you did."

"Yes, but after Josie, didn't he, Josie? Josie was first, then Miss Amy came—"

"And who is Miss Amy?"

"The grand-niece like of Mr. Drane—of her we thought was Mr. Drane," Zella explained. "Him and her was the family—the rest of us was just the help."

"Then Josie was the first to open the door, and Miss Amy was the first to follow her, and then this Mr. Judd came. Who else after that?"

"Norbert—he's the colored house-keeper. Mrs. Vincent—she's the house-keeper. Maggie Maney, the cook. George, the chauffeur. And I came. We just stood at the door; nobody went in."

"And about when was this?"

"Around nine o'clock; maybe five or ten minutes after. Mrs. Vincent sent Josie up because breakfast was ready and Mr. Drane hadn't come down yet."

"Everyone else had?"

"No; not Mr. Judd and not Mr. Dart—" Josie said.

"Dart? What Dart?"

"The undertaker man," Zella explained. "He's an old friend of Mr. Drane's and sometimes he comes to play cards and stays the night. He always has the blue guest room. But last night he didn't stay."

"Not that I knew it," Josie interrupted, raising herself on her elbow. "I knocked on his door when I came up the first time. That was about half past eight. I thought —" she

hesitated. "I thought he answered that time."

"I see!" Brennan said. "You knocked to wake him up and you thought he answered. What did he say?"

"I thought he said 'All right! Yes!' or something like that. So then I went to Mr. Judd's room and knocked and he said 'All right; I'm up.'"

"No, sir, but I didn't think anything of it. Mr. Drane don't often have to be called; he always woke up of himself. I thought he was in the bathroom, likely, and would be down. I just knocked on his door and went on, sort of reminding him. The others I waited for an answer because they were guests, and guests ain't sure."

"And the second time you came up you got no farther than Mr. Drane's door? You fainted there?"

"Yes, sir; that's it."

"Show me these two guest rooms," Brennan said to Zella, and she went with him, first to the yellow room Judd had occupied and then to the blue room with its untouched bed. Brennan looked around the rooms without much care, but on his way to the stairs he called the officer name Joe and told him to look into the two rooms carefully. Zella went back to Josie and Brennan went down to the lower floor.

As Brennan reached the lower hall the screen of the front door was pulled open and a young man, his face betraying his excitement, came in.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "I know who you are; you're the detective. I saw you — it was when our house was robbed and I was before the grand jury to tell what was stolen."

"Yes, you're Robert Carter," Brennan said simply. "Seven three four Beech Avenue. You made a good witness. Your man went to the pen. You a friend here?"

"Yes, Amy," young Carter said, reddening more. "We're—we would have been engaged. I just heard of this awful business and I came as soon as I could. Is she—"

"Eating breakfast, I shouldn't wonder," Brennan said. "Go right in, if it's the usual thing and you want to. I've been put on this case and I'm looking it over a bit."

"If there's anything I can do—" Carter suggested.

"No; never mind that now," Brennan said. "I'll take it up with you if I need to. I want to talk to Miss Drane next and you can help me most by steadying her down if she's excited at all. Tell her I'm out here on the porch and will see her whenever she's ready. No hurry. Let her take her own time. Tell her it's nothing to be afraid of."

"That's fine of you," Carter said, putting out his hand impulsively.

"Brennan is the name," the detective said, shaking Carter's hand. Trot along now."

Bob Carter found Amy and Simon Judd finishing their breakfast and about to arise. Mrs. Vincent at her end of the table had eaten nothing, merely sipping tea, and her face showed she was still in great pain. Impulsively Amy arose as Carter en-

tered and he was holding her in his arms before he was aware he had intended to do any such thing.

"Oh, Bob, Bob! Isn't it dreadful!" Amy cried as he tried to comfort her; "If I didn't have you I wouldn't know what to do!"

"Yes—well, you've got me all right, honey," he said. "Don't you take it so hard. It's bad enough, but you want to buck up. No good in letting it get you too hard. We'll stick it out together."

"It's so good to have you here," she said, wiping her eyes again. "I don't mean to break down. I'm trying to—to not."

"That's the idea!" Carter agreed. "And now, look here, honey—there's a detective follow out there wants to talk to you. Just don't let it worry you, that's all. He won't be rough; he's a nice sort. And we needn't go out until you're ready; he says he's in no hurry."

"I'm ready now, Bob," she said. "You'll come, Mr. Judd."

"Surest thing you know. Detectives are the thing I want to see; I'm going to be one myself."

"You'll see a good one when you see this Brennan," Carter said. "None better."

"That's the kind I want to see," said Simon Judd, and they went out to the veranda. Brennan arose as they appeared.

"Miss Drane," he said. "And this would be Mr. Judd? My name's Brennan as Carter has probably told you. I've been put on this case. I've got to ask some questions of you, Miss Drane, but if there are any you don't care to answer in a crowd we'll leave them until later. No, you men need not go; I'd rather have you here—the young lady is less apt to be nervous. Let's sit down; we may as well be comfortable."

"I've had the officers make a search of three rooms up there," Brennan said. "Mr. Drane's room—we'll call him that, or call her that—and the room Mr. Dart was to occupy, and your room, Mr. Judd."

"Suits me all right," Simon Judd said heartily. "Anything you do suits me; I'm going to be a detective myself, and the way you do it is what I want to see."

"We'll talk that over later, then," said Brennan after a glance at the huge Westerner. "I don't suppose, Miss Drane, we'll find anything in those rooms that will mean anything, although a man can never tell. I've talked to Josie and got all she could tell me, and Zella has told me her story. You, they say, were the second person to reach Mr. Drane's door. Just tell me why you went there and what you saw."

Amy, folding and refolding her handkerchief, told what we already know.

"Yes; nothing in all that," said Brennan. "Now, have you personally any reason to think any particular person killed—" He pointed toward the house with his thumb.

(Continued Next Week)

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**Esther Gould's
Book Corner**

JUST PARAGRAPHS

A book by a deep sea diver looks as if it might be a real coup in the history of publishing—that is until someone gets one by a whale or a shark. This is a book promised for the Fall by Thomas Eadie who received the Congressional Medal of Honor for rescuing his fellow diver in working to salvage the "S4."

With a sort of touching faith the literati of the country appraise their publishers and the literary departments of the papers of their whereabouts for the summer. It is as if they had an ever-springing hope that there might be a royalty check from the former or a philanthropist's check from one of the latter trying to find them.

**A NEW DEPARTURE
"UTHER AND IGRAINE"**

By Warwick Deeping
Alfred A. Knopf

It is a great temptation, when an author well known for one type of thing turns to another, to compare the two, usually to the disparagement of the newer. But this, tempting as it is, is palpably unfair. If Warwick Deeping, author of the very popular "Doomsday" and "Sorrell and Son" wishes to try his hand at an historical novel this should be judged as an historical novel only.

"Uther and Igraine" is an historical novel and of a period of which it is particularly hard to write convincingly. Mr. Deeping has done well in many respects but he has in

large extent failed, as so many historical novelists do fail, in being convincing. To turn back to an age of barbarism and write of a time when life was held so lightly, loves were loved so fiercely, is to stretch our credulity to the breaking point. That it stretches the author's too, is evidenced by the fact that his characters are seldom more than puppets taking part in acts for which history pulls the strings.

But what Mr. Deeping has done is to make a glorious tapestry. He has changed his style to one rich, positively riotous in color, but with stiff straight lines like those old tapestries in the ages before they dared allow themselves, in art, the informality of curves. For instance, in description of a struggle, between two women, "Igraine despite her spirit was faint from loss of blood and all a-tremble." This rigidity and pomposity of style which though I might quote endlessly I could not illustrate properly away from the whole, is, while slightly tiresome, yet appropriate to the subject.

Uther and Igraine were the mother and father of King Arthur of Britain. This is the story of the stormy years before they came together, when Uther, after having rescued the girl from a terrible death at the hands of barbarians, leaves her, thinking her a nun. She was only a novice but had not told him. Then follows a long period of woe for both of them, ending at last in a duel between Uther and the girl's husband. Merlin and sorcery enter into the story which is, on the whole, worth reading for the colorful picture it presents of that far off time.

The women of Porto Rico are now asking for the vote, and it's our opinion that if they really want it the boys might as well let 'em have it first as last.

**A PSYCHIC NOVEL
"THE DOOR UNLATCHED"**

By Marie Cher
Minton Balch & Co.

Marie Cher is a talented author, an American, whose novel, "The Door Unlatched," as well as a collection of her essays, was first published in England. Miss Cher has taken as this first subject for her talent a curious one, a story with great difficulties which she has handled skillfully.

Roger Darrington, living in Paris and without any very decisive interest in life, becomes very much enamored with the history of the French Revolution. Living in rooms which played a part in those stirring days and creating them over again for himself he suddenly finds his personality taken over by an alien one, a man who actually did live a century and more ago and played a vital part in that great drama. From that time on Roger only half lives, this strange Raoul taking possession of him and putting him through these heart rending experiences at his pleasure. To add to his fantastic dilemma the child for whom he is tutor and her mother both fit into his dream. This places him in the unpleasant position of being whisked from reality to unreality in the presence of others and thereby sometimes losing his proper dignity. The story moves soberly and to an inevitable climax. The book is, as I have said, exceedingly well done, the style is easy and vivid. It may or may not be appealing to you as a story. To me it was not. I found myself regretting that Miss Cher, with so much at her command of literary talent and historical background, of knowledge of contemporary Paris and contemporary human nature, should not have found different, perhaps more vital, use of them.

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