



# THE HUMAN SPHINX

By Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATIONS BY K.E. WATSON

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**Highland Park Press**

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.

Dr. Blessington discounts the theory of suicide, saying that Drane was definitely murdered. Dr. Blessington comments on the fact that all the servants in the household of Drane are sick, and that Drane has never discharged a servant for ill health. Dick Brennan, the detective, arrives to investigate the case.

Brennan questions the persons in the house, asking Amy if anyone had any reason to kill her "uncle."

Amy says no one had any reason to kill her uncle. After further questioning, she is asked about Dart. Meanwhile Judd has told the story of his acquaintance with the actual John Drane in Riverbank.

Simon Judd proposes to Brennan that he help in the solution of the case, serving as Brennan's partner. Brennan accepts the proposal immediately. Judd concedes that Amy "ain't what she says she is."

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY**

"Change?" the doctor queried.  
"As if, up to some time, he was the real John Drane and from then on was this woman playin' she was him," explained Simon Judd.

"Why, since it is brought to my attention with this mystery in mind," Dr. Blessington said, "there was a time when I noticed a change in John Drane, a shocking change as I thought it. The time is pretty well fixed in my mind, too. As a matter of fact there have been two very distinct changes in this John Drane. One was when he returned from California; I hardly knew him. The other—the most shocking one—was some five months later. As a physician,

coming to the house frequently, I noticed it particularly. Just before he went to California this John Drane—man or woman—was decidedly run down in health; in bad shape, I thought, although I was not asked to advise him. Then he went to California and when he returned he was like, as we say, another man. He was brisker, more cheerful, and he had put on quite a little flesh for such a thin man. He walked better and stood better. At that time his hair was dark, but he probably used a dye. The man who went to California may not have been the woman who returned. On the other hand the change may have been wrought by rest and the warm climate."

"And the other time, five months later, said Brennan.

"A more striking change," the physician said. From the time Drane returned from California looking so well he began to run down again. I did make so bold as to speak to him about it and he said he knew he must do something; he said he thought he would go south, to Hot Springs, and take a long rest. A week later he went he was gone three months. He came back with his hair absolutely gray, as it is now, his face emaciated, his body nothing but bones. It was a shocking change. Except for one thing I might be willing to swear that, in my opinion, the person who came back from Hot Springs was not the man who went there. That thing is a scar on this woman's abdomen—the scar of an appendicitis operation—if that was indeed where she went—in order that her sex might not be discovered by any one who knew her."

"That's a possibility," Brennan admitted.

She could have changed into women's clothes at some stop-over en route," the doctor said, "changing back into male garments on her return. If that is the answer she must have had a bad time of the operation to wear down so tremendously. But it is possible that the man who left here that time was not the woman who returned here a little later."

Brennan said nothing for a full minute.

"I'm afraid I don't see much in that idea, doctor," he said finally.

"There's too much of the impossible in it. The person who returned from Hot Springs—if that was where the person went—was certainly very very much like the person who left here as John Drane, is it not so? Enough so that you were not particularly suspicious? Then how could a substitution have been made? Who was this woman who was so much like John Drane that she could come back here and take his place in the house and at his office and in Wall Street, going on with his speculations without creating comment? The thing is rather absurd. Such a woman must have planned taking John Drane's place for years; she must have learned all about his business to the minutest details, and all about his home affairs here. She must have planned to murder him or make away with him somehow. It is too improbable, doctor."

"You asked me, you know," said Dr. Blessington, a little offended.

"And your answer is perfectly good," said Brennan. "Now let me ask you another: did you ever notice anything to make you think this woman was insane? I mean the victim of mania. What do you think of her idea of having sick servants and no others? What about her friendship with this undertaker?"

Dr. Blessington turned these questions in his mind before he answered.

"You understand that I am not an alienist," he said then, choosing his words with some care. "I am only what is called a general practitioner. As one of the hospital staff I have sometimes recommended to Drane, at his request, chronic patients still able to do easy work, and it never occurred to me that there was insanity in his desire to aid the unfortunates. To tell you the truth, Brennan, I thought it was fine of him to give these people jobs in his house. Even when they fell ill he saw that they had the best attention, medical and otherwise. When they died—"

"A good many did die, did they?" asked Brennan, and Dr. Blessington colored.

"You will remember that they were mostly people doomed to die," he said stiffly. "They had, many of them—most of them—incurable diseases."

"But they did die," Brennan in-

sisted. "What I mean is this, doctor: this woman known as John Drane had great wealth, if she wanted to help these incurables she could have sent them to sanitariums and she could never have missed the money. She seems to have liked to have the sickly, the dying, and the undertaker clustered about her. I'd call that morbid, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I might call it morbid," Dr. Blessington admitted. "I wouldn't say it meant she was crazy."

"Well, I don't know that it makes such a difference whether she was crazy or not; she has been murdered just the same, sane or insane," Brennan said. "I'm just trying to get a clear picture of her in my mind. That's all now, doctor; I can get in touch with you if anything else turns up."

The doctor opened the door leading into the hall, but Simon Judd held him with a question.

"Say, doc," he said, "how long have you known this John Drane, anyway?"

Dr. Blessington pulled at his chin, trying to place an exact date.

"He came here, I believe, in 1893," he said. "It may have been '92 or '94. I met him first that same year when I called on him for a gift to our hospital. I know that I hoped he might make use of my services if he needed a physician, but I was not called in until two years later—say in 1895. I've been the family physician since then."

"And along back there in '93 and '95 he was just about the same feller he looks as he lies up there on the bed?" Simon Judd asked.

"Yes," said the doctor slowly. "Yes, increasing age and illness taken into consideration."

"You don't mean to say!" Simon Judd exclaimed. "Well, black my cats! And I dare say it was along about when he called you in that he began to gather these sickly hired helps around him, huh?"

"Yes, I think that is so," Dr. Blessington said. That is so."

"And when, doc," Simon Judd asked cheerfully, "was the time when he murdered the first of these sickly hired hands of his?"

(Continued Next Week)

**BEAUTY ENGINEERS IS NEWEST CRAFT ARE SEEKING THE BIZARRE**

Aesthetic Architects of Modern Decorative Effects Personal and Otherwise Busy

Finer and more exquisite workmanship in everything that touches our daily life has produced a new and yet unnamed profession which might well be called "beauty engineers."

This engineering profession has broken away somewhat from the methods of architects who have created new standards and followed them consistently, and interior decorators who too often reproduce over and over the ideals which were created before their own days, and which they seek to perpetuate by standardizing and recopying. Not so with the beauty engineers!

They are looking for that which is new and unusual and which at the same time represents true types and forms of modern beauty and art. They are combing the world for designs, patterns and styles, and using their own talents to develop and improve upon them so that they will not offend the critical standards of bygone generations.

It was inevitable that the beauty engineer should have tackled toilet accessories in demonstrating the skill of the new profession. The beauty engineers announce that after a year's existence study and research they have developed a series of designs and they have the satisfaction of seeing their creations manufactured in an exquisite new material. It is fascinating to follow the process by which new beauties of the dressing table are being worked out by engineering minds.

The new toilet accessories consist of several patterns. The designs may be traced to authentic sources. The modernized creations of our beauty engineers shown in the finished material are superb. One pattern is called "Ming." It is an Oriental theme—or, if you prefer French, call it "motif."

From Chinese Vases  
The beauty engineers claim their inspiration for this particular group of patterns was obtained from a study of bowls and vases on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The skill of the engineers and the artist was concentrated on these rare

prizes in the Metropolitan. The result was that floral designs of great beauty were finally produced in a variety of colors including Mandarin red, jade green and jet black. The beauty engineers never lost sight of the fact that the Oriental theme has withstood the tests of the time and has satisfied the most discriminating leaders of style. It therefore became their task to preserve the fascinating effects of the past and to link them with the rising standards of the present. The material appears in other patterns and designs.

A creation by Verna Cook Salomonsky is called the "Empire," and it possesses all the romance and beauty which distinguishes the Napoleonic period, and harmonizes the historic beauties of our olden France and America with the present day standards of the two republics. The Empire pattern as it is known in furniture, interior decoration, dresses, hats, and table services, including silverware, has been adopted by the famous New York creator of the Empire pattern of Lucite so that Milady's dressing table is a triumph of 1928.

**GIVES WOBBLY DRIVER YEAR IN REFORMATORY**

On Iowa judge has at least solved the question of ridding "the tall corn state" of intoxicated drivers when that law enforcer sentenced a motorist of Cedar Rapids to the State Reformatory at Anamosa for a year, according to a bulletin issued by the Safety Division of the Automobile Club of Illinois.

"A year at hard labor for an offense of this calibre is severe in itself," declared Mr. Mayer, president of the Automobile club, in commenting upon the penalty, "and ought to give the motorist much time for reflection." Pedestrians and motorists alike in this mid-western state, are safe from at least one serpent-crazed road devil whose career of hectic driving was cut short by the wisdom of a judge who believed in "Safe Driving."

**LUTHERAN LEAGUE AT FORT WAYNE IN 1929**

Fort Wayne, Ind., was chosen for the 1929 convention city of the International Lutheran Walthers League, winning over Cleveland, 504 to 458.

The convention meeting this year in Milwaukee, by resolution declared itself in favor of winter conferences as reaching more members than meetings at other times of the year, and voted approval of the executive board's action in placing the Arcadia summer camp in Michigan under control of the national organization.

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