

THE SILK ENIGMA

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"ZORA, THE INVISIBLE,"
"DEATH IN THE STALLS," &c.

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it usually did. A man was standing beside the bed on which she lay. His features were in shadow, but she imagined he might be a Chinaman.

"You feel better, Mees Varley?"

"That voice! Where had she heard it before? The vibrations of it quivered the strings of her memory. She remembered. That afternoon in the store. The Chinaman who had come to inquire about Suchow silk. So the Superintendent had been right. There was some mystery about that silk.

"Where am I?" she questioned him, and was surprised to find how weak and how distant her voice sounded. "What is the meaning of this—this outrage?"

"Please be calm, Mees Varley. You are quite safe. I come to see that you are all right—is that not so?"

What could she answer him? She felt far from being all right, as he put it.

"Let me go at once!" Phyllis demanded, raising herself quickly in an effort at what she believed might be one of escape from all this mystery.

"I am sorry, Mees Varley, but not yet. You are not yet well enough to make the journey. See, I have brought you something to drink," and the Chinaman held out towards her an ornate and curiously-fashioned beaker.

The girl's eyes regarded the glass and its contents with wild suspicion, and she shook her head.

"Please take it away—I am not thirsty," she told him, her parched mouth giving an instant lie to her request.

"You will drink, Miss Varley!" The man's tone now was not a request—it was an order. "It will make you feel better."

She felt the cold rim of the beaker touch her burning lips as the man at her side held it. Then the liquid ran into her mouth, and she allowed it to slip unresisting down her throat. She found it singularly pleasant, like melon juice flavoured with seductive spices. In a moment she had taken the vessel from him and was eagerly gulping down the contents.

Phyllis felt like thanking him but remembered her position, and remained silent, allowing him to remove the beaker.

"That is well," he chanted in a curious monotone. "In a moment I will come for you, for His Excellency wishes to speak with you."

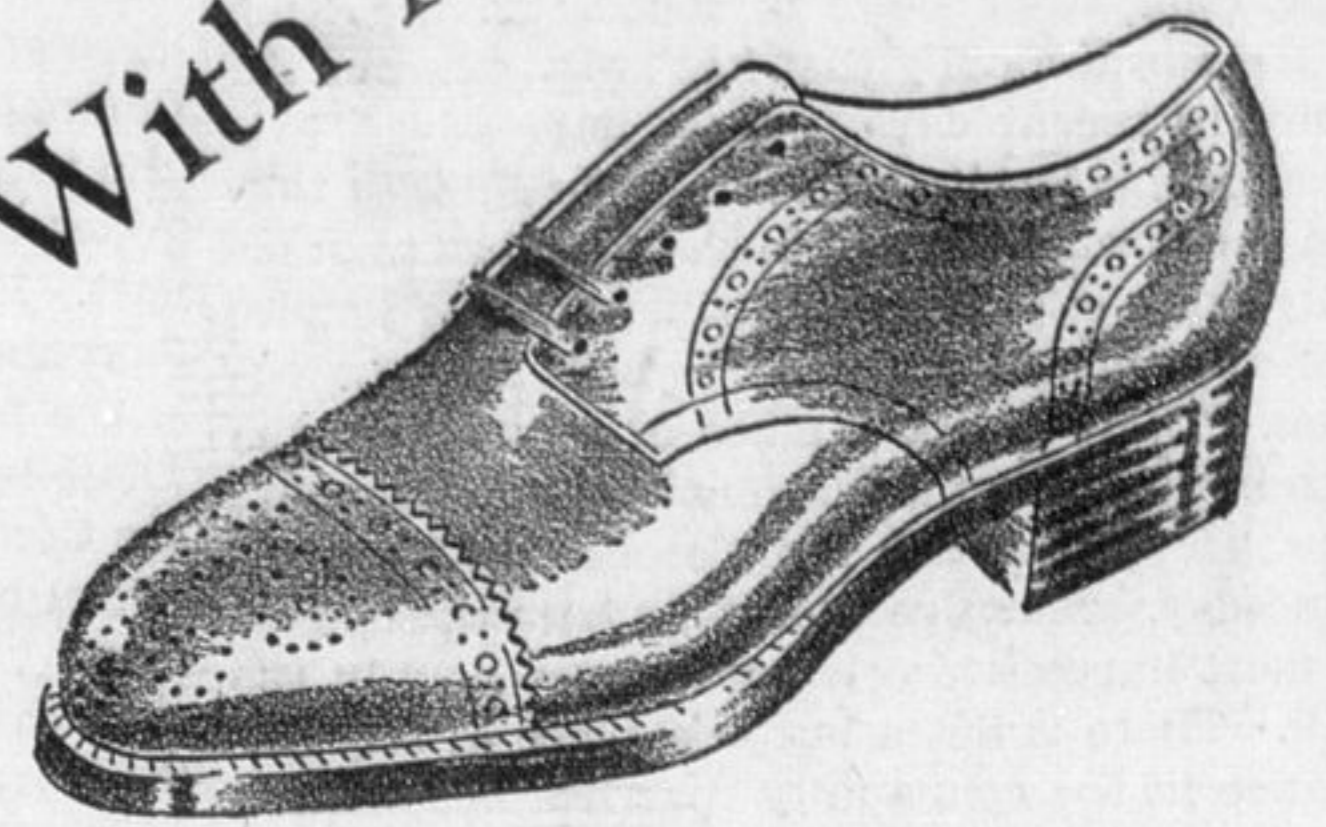
Silently as he had come, the man moved away, leaving her wondering whether this was a dream—a dream of stark unreality.

(To Be Continued)

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CHAPTER XII
OUTBURST

Phyllis Varley had felt moderately excited since the moment she had looked up from the counter and gazed into those inscrutable almond eyes.

Giving evidence before the Coroner that morning had not been in the least dramatic. Little more than a formality, while the presence of the Superintendent had more than reassured her. She had grown to like the Superintendent. When he had first interviewed her she had not been so sure about it. He had given her the impression that while he was asking her questions innumerable all the time he knew the right answers.

She had, too, pondered over the mystery surrounding Nolescue's death, and her ponderings had been intensified by the fact that Philip Slater had revealed himself as a shrewd and quite clever thinker. It was odd, she thought, how she had so swiftly been drawn to Philip in the past forty-eight hours, and she speculated whether their relationship would have been quite so intense as it now was if Nolescue had not died. The man's death had perplexed her because her mind was not attuned to mystery with its plot and counter-plot. Had she, like Philip, been a student of crime fiction she might have found in the details of the affair in which she was involved something akin to the ingenuity of fiction writers, but Phyllis culled her reading in more romantic quarters. She liked to be amused, and what thrills she fancied were of a quite different order.

Yet she felt that she ought to help Philip if she could even if she could not quite understand the vapourings of the other girls at the store who seemed to regard her in the light of a distinguished person, merely because she had been unlucky enough to discover a corpse under the counter. Philip could talk of little else whenever they met, and while their little jaunt in the West End two nights ago had been exciting and thrilling in its way it had been difficult to divert the young man's mind from criminal speculation.

Oddly enough since the visit of the Chinaman to the store business had been unusually brisk and she had been kept busy right up to the time the store closed at half past six.

Philip had said he would call around for her at eight o'clock so that they could have a further discussion, and while Phyllis would much preferred to have been taken to the cinema she felt that perhaps if Philip did well in what he had been asked to do by the Superintendent at Scotland Yard, Mr. Oxtan might be inclined to see that his promotion in Oxtans was more rapid than it might otherwise have been.

In the staff-room the other girls were still talking about the murder. Several of them had noticed the incident of the Chinaman that afternoon and pressed Phyllis for details which she gave readily enough.

"I think you should have held him yourself," piped up little Muriel Rich

in a voice redolent with indignation and not a little scorn.

Phyllis regarded her colleague with surprised eyes. Miss Rich was normally a shy little person who seldom obtruded her opinions or her conversation on any of them.

"I did what I could," Phyllis protested, "but you must remember that there was the width of the counter between us. But I didn't know you were interested, Muriel."

"I'd give anything to lay hands on the person who killed Mr. Nolescue," she told them, and the hint of venom in her voice was almost startling.

A sudden silence fell on the room where the girls were changing into their outdoor clothes and renovating their complexions.

"I never knew you felt that way about it," Phyllis broke the silence, hardly knowing what to say.

Muriel Rich turned to her and there was fury in her eyes. "Of course you wouldn't," she spat out the words like a tornado. "You thought he was interested in you, didn't you? Well, you're wrong, Phyllis Varley. It was me he preferred. We'd arranged to go out to-night and now..." her voice trailed away like a fade-out in a broadcast and Phyllis was surprised to see that the girl's brown eyes were wet.

"I hope you told the Superintendent about your friendship, Muriel. He might be interested."

"I told him nothing," Miss Rich said, "because I don't see what my private affairs have to do with the police. All I know is that I've lost a friend... lost the only man who ever showed any interest in me. And for why?" Her voice rose on a hysterical crescendo.

"Answer me that! Why did he die? You don't know. Then I'll tell you. He was killed because he knew something. He hinted at it one day last week. Someone had followed him to London. He was sure of that. And they hunted him down, just as the cruel dogs hunt down the defenceless fox and the stag. He hadn't a chance. He was just a friendless foreigner." Miss Rich turned away and reached for her coat hanging from its accustomed peg.

When she had gone the burble of voices broke out afresh.

"Fancy Muriel!"

"Who'd have thought it!"

"I always said she was deep."

"You can never tell with those little 'mousy' ones. They bottle things up so."

"And it takes a murder to unleash the torrent."

So they went on discussing and commenting on Miss Rich's revelation.

THE BLACK CAR AGAIN

A little dazed, Phyllis passed out into the dark October night.

The wind had a "bite" in it and she decided rather than get the Tube to Sloane Square she would walk the distance.

It was particularly dark at the corner of Cadogan Gardens and Moore street, seemed darker still as she turned into its straight length. So dark, in fact, that she scarcely saw the black saloon

car standing silently at the kerb until she was almost abreast of it.

From that moment subsequent events occurred so swiftly that afterwards when she had time to review matters in detail it seemed almost incredible.

As she drew level with the rear of the car, the door was flung hurriedly open and someone hurried herself upon her, pushing out a hand against her face as he did so. The hand held something that flashed white and she felt its dampness. She flung up her hands to ward it off but the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the attack prevented any form of defence. She gasped, which was just what she was intended to do.

A sickly, pungent aroma assailed her nostrils and the next moment even while she felt herself being lifted bodily from her feet she found herself slipping away into heavy oblivion which was oddly different from her lapse from consciousness in the shop. From that moment she remembered nothing of the journey in the black car. She did not even hear the soft purr of the engine as it was started up.

Sen Yat Soh seemed to be in a particularly good humour. Arrayed in his Oriental costume with the embroidered dragons upon it, he reclined with Eastern nonchalance on a richly carved divan.

Ling Foo must be congratulated on the speed at which he worked and Sen Yat Soh had not expected success in obtaining the indispensable Miss Varley at the first attempt. It would have been quite easy for his plans to have been negated, but now that he had won another round in the campaign he began to feel that it had been worth while after all invoking the spirits of his ancestors.

Below in another room Phyllis Varley struggled lazily out of her oblivion. Her head burned and ached; her throat felt parched; her tongue rather too big for her mouth. It was an odd and altogether unpleasant sensation. And the worst of it was she couldn't remember what had happened.

Slowly she opened her eyes, even though the lids felt as though they had weights on them. She found herself in a dimly-lighted room, but where the illumination came from she could not see. It appeared to be concealed from a point somewhere over in the corner. Then slowly, and rather painfully, she began to piece things together. Muriel Rich... her extraordinary outburst in the staff room... the accreted comments of the other girls. She remembered passing out of the warm atmosphere of Oxtans... feeling the cool and welcome breath of the night against her cheeks. She had decided to walk back to Moore street. Yes, it was coming clearer now. The fog was lifting from her brain. She remembered the black saloon car... someone had leaped out... something had been pushed against her face...

"HIS EXCELLENCY'S" WISHES

With an effort Phyllis swam herself on one elbow. Her head swam; the room gyrated; the dim light seemed dimmer still and she was glad to lower herself into her original recumbent position.

Her hat had been removed but otherwise she was dressed in her big coat with the deep fur collar just as she had left Oxtans. But strive as she might she could not guess the reason for this outrage. She remembered having read about such things happening, but that it should have happened to her seemed beyond the bounds of possibility.

Then her memory reminded her of the Chinaman's visit to the store. It seemed a long way away now—like looking through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars, although it could not have been longer than that afternoon, assuming, that was, that this was the same day, or rather night.

A sudden sense of nausea assailed her. It wasn't a physical nausea, but an emotional one. For the first time since she had made unwilling contact with the death of Nolascue, she felt afraid.

Then she became aware that she was not alone in that eerie apartment. She heard distinctly the soft padding of feet across the carpet. Or it might have been her heart pounding against her ribs.

Her eyes a moment later told her it was not her heart she had heard, even though it was beating far quicker than

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Unusual Tea, Sale at South Porcupine

Handicrafts, Carving, Coffee Bread, Costumes to Feature Event at Finnish United Church

The greatest event of the year for the Ladies' Aid Sewing Circle of the South Porcupine Finnish United Church is their sale of work Tuesday afternoon and evening, from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., at the South Porcupine United Church, Bloor avenue.

Last spring the South Porcupine Finnish ladies had their sold at Timmings in connection with the sale

sponsored by the sister congregation. This year all former records will be surpassed in the variety and quality and quantity of all kinds of needlework, embroidery and other kinds of artistic handicraft made by the South Porcupine Finnish ladies during the past 12 months, and the ladies decided to hold their own sale of work in their own home town. It is confidently expected that at least 600 people will visit the sale and exhibition during the Tuesday afternoon and evening this year at South Porcupine United Church.

Home-made famous Finnish coffee bread, which during the past years has always had a great sale—in fact the ladies never had enough on sale to equal the demand—will again be on sale.

Ladies of the local Finnish congregation, dressed in Finnish national costumes—will serve Finnish United Church coffee all afternoon and evening.

A new feature will be the exhibition of home-made rugs, tapestry, linen, cotton and wool cloth, made on looms or frames, also samples of Old Country needle work, samples of mending, etc. These articles have been made by local Finns.

Unique souvenirs, carved out of Northern Ontario wood, will be exhibited and sold by Mr. Otto Nenonen, a Timmings Finnish artist in wood carving, who will also give a personal demonstration of carving work during the afternoon and evening.

The sale of work and refreshments will be in aid of the South Porcupine Finnish United Church.

Mill Boiler Room Near the Bay Destroyed by Fire

Fire breaking out in the boiler house of the William Milne and Son Lumber Mill at Trout Lake, near North Bay, on Thursday afternoon completely destroyed the boiler house and the old shell of the mill.

The shell had been dismantled for some time being used only for storing lumber.

The fire was kept from spreading to the adjoining planing mill which suffered only slight damage. No insurance was carried on the boiler house. The loss was estimated at \$1,000.

Eighteen Dirigible Crashes in 23 Years

From 1912 to 1935 the List Was a Serious One. Last Added Another.

The wrecking of the huge German dirigible, Hindenburg, last week made the major list of tragedies from this form of airship touch the total of nineteen. From the year 1912 to the year 1935 there were eighteen major disasters involving the dirigible type of airship. Three of these major accidents involved United States dirigibles—the Akron, Macon and Shenandoah.

Here is the list of disasters as compiled by the American press agency:—
Feb. 12, 1935—The Navy dirigible Macon, destroyed off the Pacific Coast; two dead, eighty-one saved.

April 14, 1933—United States Navy dirigible Akron crashed in electrical storm off New Jersey coast, seventy-three dead, three survivors.

Oct. 4, 1930—British dirigible R-101 exploded over France while en route from England to India, forty-six dead.

May 25, 1928—Italian dirigible Italia crashed in Arctic in flight to North Pole; eight dead.

Sept. 3, 1925—United States dirigible Shenandoah, formerly ZR-1, wrecked in storm in Ohio; fourteen killed.

Dec. 21, 1923—French dirigible Dixmude, presumably struck by lightning over Mediterranean; fifty-two killed.

Feb. 21, 1922—United States dirigible Rcmr, bought by the United States from Italy, crashed in flames near Hampton Roads army base; 34 killed.

Aug. 24, 1921—Dirigible ZR-2, bought in England for the United States, frame buckled over Humber River; 42 killed.

Jan. 29, 1921—British dirigible R-34, wrecked in gale in Howden, England; no lives lost.

July 21, 1919—Dirigible burned over Chicago; 10 killed.

July 15, 1919—British airship NS-11, struck by lightning over North Sea; 12 killed.

June 20, 1914—Airship and airplane collided at Vienna; 9 killed.

Sept. 9, 1913—Zeppelin L-1 destroyed over Heligoland; 15 killed.

Oct. 17, 1913—Zeppelin L-2 exploded over Jchannahth Airdrome; 28 killed.

July 2, 1912—Balloon Akron exploded at Atlantic City; 5 killed.

Besides the Zeppelin L-1 and L-2, Count Zeppelin lost four other great peace-time dirigibles in accidents, the Zeppelins 3 and 6 and the Deutschlands 1 and 2.

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