



# WHAT HAPPENED AT MONTALBAN

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### PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

**WHAT HAPPENED AT MONTALBAN** Story  
**MOLLY BALSON:** A young London nurse, specializing in the care of children.  
**SIR JOHN MONTALBAN:** Head of the Montalban family nearly ninety years of age.  
**ROBERT MONTALBAN:** His son, who has been master of the family seat for twenty years. He has three sons: **ROBERT, Junior**, crippled in a road smash (unmarried); **RALPH**, (married); **CHARLES**, 21 (unmarried), and two unmarried daughters **ELSIE** and **CLÉONE**.  
**BARBARA MONTALBAN:** Wife of Ralph.  
**MALLA DAUNT:** Met her death at MONTALBAN in mysterious circumstances.  
**LAWRENCE SEVERIN:** Secretary-companion to the veteran Sir John.

### CHAPTER II

#### "HE'S COME HOME"

Molly's first glimpse of MONTALBAN was a memorable experience. The night was moonlit and the soft country rolling away in meadow on either side of the road was silvered with a shimmer like daisies. Dr. Leonard's car rounded the end of a grey wall, between gateposts which had not supported a gate for a hundred years, and came through flower beds along a gravel drive; and there was the sudden glistering sweep of water before them, the drive dividing to encircle it.

It was not a large lake, perhaps four acres in extent, and artificially lowered from the lake and a stream which flowed through the grounds. The house looked at them from lit windows across the breadth of it, a long gracious frontage, raised upon a balustraded terrace, a flight of marble stairs leading down to the water in the centre of the scene.

"Like a stage back-cloth," said Molly. "You don't see the real MONTALBAN stuff here. It's Georgian, and particularly fine, but it's standing on the site of a Norman castle, and after you've looked at the remains of the Keep and spent a few hours in the park you'll probably come to my conclusion that this house and this garden have no business here at all. Still, it's pretty effective."

The car crossed a hump-backed stone bridge over the stream, where it flowed out into the lake, and the path swung gradually round and drove up on to the terrace, over beautifully levelled grey flags mother-of-pearl in the moonlight. They stopped before the door, which was open upon a small, dark-panelled outer hall.

"You must have a look at all this in daylight. Take your time over it; it repays examination." Doctor Leonard got out of the car, and opened the door for her. "We'll go straight in. They're expecting you."

Molly looked up at the face of MONTALBAN above her, three lofty storeys, and attics above that, and the whole sweeping, noble frontage full of big uniform windows. "What is it Portland stone? Or doesn't it look so white by daylight?"

"Stone, and practically white, but I couldn't say where it's from." He led the way in, through inner doors silent as the felt-lined doors of a church, and brought her into a huge hall dimly lit, with a magnificent staircase in unexpected oak, older than the house, running upward at the inner end. Wide of tread, mirror-black with age, they threw back the orange points of the lights from every facet, leading the eye

upward to a wide gallery which crossed the end of the hall.

Along this gallery a woman was coming at a run, her skirt caught up in one hand. She was short, but so graceful that until she halted halfway down the stairs one did not notice her heavy build and so vivacious that it came as a surprise to Molly to find her, upon nearer view, grey-haired and certainly fifty.

She came down to them more slowly, but with a ready smile. Her eyes were very dark, almond-shaped in her rounded, creamy face; she reminded Molly of an older edition of the Renoir Parisienne.

"You'll find us a trifle distraught tonight, Doctor Leonard," she said. "We're expecting Ralph any moment. I thought when I heard your car—"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you. How is Mrs. Ralph?"

"Still in bed, though I'm a little surprised at that myself. Desperately excited, though she has hardly a word to say. But I think that perhaps when Ralph comes home—and in a few days more—"

She made a small indifferent gesture of one hand which ended the sentence for her gracefully enough, if without any great passion. "This is Nurse— I forget the name you told me. I never remember names."

"Nurse Balcon—Mrs. MONTALBAN. Perhaps we might go up at once. Thank you, I know my way—no need to trouble anyone."

They climbed the stairs she had descended. "Well?"

"His mother, I suppose?"

"Yes, French—from an old family, and as poor as the rest of them. What did you think of her?"

"She's been a beauty," said Molly. "You have a way of putting your finger on the place, Molly." But he said no more. He had already said much more than was his habit about the patients and their households, however peculiar.

Doctor Leonard tapped upon the door of a big bedroom on the first floor, and a voice unexpectedly cool and sharp, bade them come in. A beautiful room, double-windowed, under rather than over-furnished, and flooded with light; a very large bed, and a very small woman in it, propped among pillows and wrapped in angora wool. Graceful arms moved restlessly upon the blue eiderdown, and Molly saw an exhausted face under short straight fair hair. This was Barbara MONTALBAN, who had been Barbara Beaumary of the Leicestershire Beaumaries.

A dark woman with the face of the acquitted man was sitting upon the edge of the bed, and it was plain that her mother's chief, she might have the cool voice belonged to her. A tall, lean woman, but with something of been anything between thirty and forty. She stood as they entered.

"Well here comes your medical man my dear."

"I've brought Nurse Balcon along," said Doctor Leonard. "She'll take everything off your hands now, Miss MONTALBAN. I suppose you've everything ready for her?"

"I think so. If anything's wanting, you must pester the housekeeper, Mrs. Forester. Don't hesitate—she's used to it." A faint and enigmatic smile curved her long mouth. "I'm Cleone—the eldest of the flock. I do the dirty work when there's any to be done. Come and look at your room, while Doctor Leonard plays about with Barbara's temperature and pulse."

She led the way into a dressing-room which adjoined. "Ralph will have to move out into a guest-room until

she's better. Not the best guest-room—it might be too painful." She looked over her shoulder, and the smile came again, objective, quite without personal. "That was where she was sleeping you see, when it happened. The suggestions might be a little embarrassing especially if he did push her out of the window."

"The jury seem to have settled it, that he didn't," said Molly rather drily, glad that the door through which they had come was closed, and the patient's querulous voice only a murmur on the other side.

"I don't know that I believe much in the law myself. This was Ralph's dressing room. Like it? Convenient for mother and child. The baby's in here by the way." She opened a small door in one corner and showed a tiny room, one wall almost entirely curtained window, a frilled cot standing in the centre. "This was a powder closet once. We had the window put in a few years ago—it always seemed made for a night-nursery."

They looked down upon the sleeping child, and Cleone's voice was low, but her face revealed nothing more tender than distaste. The baby was red and wrinkled and elfin-looking still, small for three months, and not pre-possessing.

"Ralph wanted him here," said Cleone. "Ralph was mad about him. Barbara was glad to let someone else take care of him. I detest children myself—at least until they're old enough to look human. Let's go back, shall we?"

They went back to the bedside. The patient was saying complacently: "No doubt Nurse Balcon is most capable—most efficient. But I can't understand why the Rowley woman couldn't come. There was no need to take Nurse Balcon away from her duties in London—none whatever."

"I assure you I have my reasons for preferring to have you in Nurse Balcon's hands," said Doctor Leonard soothingly.

"Nurse Rowley doesn't want to be mixed up with murder cases," said Cleone quite calmly. "Or with us. Can you blame her?"

"Cleone," Mrs. Ralph gave a sharp moan of protest. "How can you say such things!"

"My dear Barbara, don't be childish. You can always console yourself by remembering that in any case the Rowley woman is practically half-witted."

It was certainly time for someone to create a diversion, and Dr. Leonard did it by taking his leave. Mrs. Ralph seemed to be an easy person to side-track, which was perhaps as well. A few casual words in a soothing voice set her purring and it was not difficult to be artificially kind to so small and helpless a creature. Molly made conversation of an exploratory kind as the doctor and Cleone left.

"Cleone enjoys saying whatever she shouldn't," explained Mrs. Ralph with surprising clarity. "Her small hands fluttered at her lips; she had very little control over them. My husband's family have no consideration for me or anyone—no consideration at all. Not even for each other. You hear how she speaks of Ralph. But he ought to be home by now. Do you suppose anything could have—"

She broke off, hearing the unmistakable sound of a car drawing up upon the terrace. She sat up.

"That's Ralph. It must be Ralph. He's here. He's come home."

(To be Continued)

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### Report Further Instances of Violence at Kirkland

Last week police at Kirkland Lake reported further cases of alleged intimidation and violence. Glen Wilson said he was attacked by several men as he was leaving a beverage room. A fifteen-year-old boy told police that as he was leaving a crowd that was watching a traps in front of the York Hotel a man asked him where he was going and then slugged him two or three times, knocking the lad unconscious. A Queen street woman reported that a rock was thrown through a window at her home—the second time for such an occurrence. Her husband is working at the Teck-Hughes. Police were also informed that a group of men had been heard planning to damage the home of a man working at the Wright-Hargreaves Mine. One man was told the (informed police) to look for another room if he didn't want to be burned in the house.

Ottawa Citizen—A ferry pilot had early breakfast in a British port, flew to Newfoundland, had lunch there and was back home for late supper, in 19 1/2 hours. Such an interval between breakfast and supper suggests that something ought to be done to speed up the transatlantic service.

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### WHY? DAD!

A good example of one of those questions grasped out of thin air by the family's young hopeful and then tossed at an unsuspecting parent is the following:  
 "Dad, why do you wind up a business when you want it to stop?"—Northern Tribune.

## TEN YEARS AGO IN TIMMINS

From data in the Porcupine Advance Files

The regular meeting of the town council was held ten years ago with Mayor Geo. S. Drew in the chair and Councillors A. Caron, Dr. S. L. Honey, R. Richardson, J. T. Chentier, J. E. H. Chateauvert and J. E. Morgan present. There were about forty men present as a sort of deputation from some of the unemployed. One young fellow, acted as spokesman for the others, practically all of whom seemed to be of foreign origin, said that none of them had a job or a place to sleep or the means of securing their food, except by the kindness of others. Mayor Drew in replying said that there were two classes of unemployed in town who had no right to expect any consideration. "I would say to these two classes of people," said the mayor, "that they are simply wasting their time in coming to the council. The council can do nothing for them." One of these classes was the group of men who had been sent to Kapuskasing to cut wood and had returned from that work. These men had been found work by the town, and yet after returning here they did not even report that they had returned. They had shown no consideration for the town and could expect little in return. The spokesman said they could not make any money at the work at Kapuskasing. Mayor Drew said that conditions were changed to-day to what they were in more prosperous times and the man who could make a decent living with a good place to sleep, good food to eat and enough to buy his clothing was fortunate. The jobs thrown up by these men had been gladly accepted by others who had been pleased to step right into their places. The other

class that should look for no special consideration from the town was the transient who had been here only a few weeks; or a month or two.

The ninth annual Charity Turkey stag, under the very able management and direction of "Lap" Laprairie and his host of assistants attracted a good attendance to St. Anthony's hall ten years ago and he even was set down as another success. As a result of that year's stag a couple of hundred or more families had Christmas cheer who would otherwise have gone without. Ten years ago Lap and his assistants were busy arranging and packing the hampers for distribution. The hampers contained food and other desirable goods for Christmas and the recipients were sure to be pleased with the generous Christmas boxes given out for Christmas 1931.

Mrs. W. J. Morgan, mother of Capt. W. J. Morgan of the McIntyre staff, died in Timmins ten years ago. Mrs. Morgan had been ill for the previous year, and was operated on in September of 1931 for cancer, but the malady was at such an advanced stage that despite all that care and skill could do her life could not be spared.

Friends in the district extended sympathy to J. T. Heffernan, of Timmins, in the death ten years ago of his mother, Mrs. Joseph Heffernan, who passed away at Toronto. The late Mrs. Heffernan was formerly a well-known and highly-esteemed resident of Guelph and the Guelph Mercury of December 10th, referred highly to her in the report of her death.

In an interview given ten years ago in Toronto, George Tough, well-known prospector of the North Land, showed great enthusiasm for the Matachewan

area. He did not confine that area to the many townships usually referred to as Matachewan, but believed the strike of gold would be found to continue through many other townships. He made special reference to the townships nearer Kirkland Lake. By the same token he thought well have continued the area north of Matachewan and to the Porcupine itself. Between here and Matachewan there are many townships that appear to be particularly rich and promising as gold areas.

Local items ten years ago included: "Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Cameron, of Vancouver, B.C., were visitors to Timmins last week visiting friends in the North Land on a trip to the East." "B. V. Harrison, manager, F. W. B. Cadman and Roy Douglas, of the head office of the Northern Canada Power Co., New Liskeard, were visitors to Timmins this week on business."