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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 CLEONE. BARBARA MONTALBAN: Wife of Ralph. MAILLA DAUNT: Met her death at MONTALBAN in mysterious circumstances. LAWRENCE SEVERN: Secretary-companion to the veteran Sir John.

CHAPTER XI IN THE STEPS OF MAILLA

Late in the afternoon, Molly telephoned to Montalban. She had not meant to do it; it was just one of those things that seem to happen without direction. Before she knew what she intended, she was in call-box waiting for her connection, the familiar rattle, her demanded and graciously granted, and a faint doubt in her mind as to whether she had been over-eager. The whole motive force of this probably foolish investigation had come from her. Severn had laughed at her then, while she had begged him, with careful restraint, to take some measures for his own protection. Probably he would be laughing still when he came to the telephone. In a moment came his voice, soft and cool, and somehow graver than she had expected. "This is Severn." "Molly here." "It's a pleasure to hear your voice, of course, but—" "This is important. I have proof, Lawrence—proof that Mailia Daunt was the girl in the car smash. Do you see the force of that?" "I'm not totally blind. But proof?" "I've got a photograph. A snapshot taken in the garden here. No, there's no possible mistake. Anyone would identify it at once as Mailia. And Lawrence—she was out for blood—Montalban blood—any Montalban blood. My nurse says she cherished the grudge of grudges against the man who had her and her mother shut up here." "And you think—" prompted Severn gently. "That she deliberately wished herself on to Charles to get even with them all. What else am I to think?" "What, indeed? And what do you want of me?"

"Something I don't suppose you can supply. An address of hers—any address of hers. She had a banking account in London, she must have had a home in London, too. And there can't have been so much secrecy about it. A woman like Mailia butting into a household like that had to have a background, even if it was a fictitious one. She had to be able to slip in a word here and there about her home and her circle. And you're neither blind nor dumb, as you remarked yourself." "On her second visit she spoke casually of a flat in a mews off Bede Street. Why? What are you going to do?" "I'm going to London, instead of staying the night here. And early tomorrow I'm going off on a pilgrimage—in the steps of Mailia Daunt. Probably backwards, as it were; retracing her steps." "There was a pause, and then Severn said: "You're cast for a new part, my dear. Do you feel equal to being my sick friend?" She laughed. "Lawrence! Are you meditating a run-out? Is it wise to say so like that? Someone may overhear you." "Meet the early train to-morrow, will you? At ten-fifteen. When we meet I may even indulge in a little prophecy." "I could do that myself," she said with sudden gravity, thinking of the only man who had certainly known the identity of Mailia Daunt. "You'll not do anything until I come?" "I should hardly have time, in any case. No, I'll wait for you. We can travel back together at night. You see, officially I'm in London now." "That night Molly slept in her own flat in Bloomsbury. She was, thought Rose, unusually silent when she should have been more informative. Naturally, one expected and demanded that a friend who had been so fortunate as to make the acquaintance of a head-lined family at first hand should talk intelligently about the experience. Molly would scarcely talk at all; even her answers to questions were abstracted and niggardly. Rose was disappointed in her evening. Molly met Severn's train next morning. He seemed a strangely different man, younger, gayer, perhaps not so weighted with the oppression of that vampire house. He had a rose-bud in his buttonhole, and as she came to him he withdrew it and threaded it thoughtfully into hers. "Mrs. Henry Riggs! The rose, I mean. What hideous names people pick out for things of beauty! Supposing your people had christened you Euphemia." Molly laughed. "Well, thank heaven, they didn't. However did you manage to get away, Lawrence?" "I told Sir John that I was going to

London. That was all. We understand each other very well." He linked his hand within her arm. "Come on, let's get out of this human tressaw puzzle, shall we? We've got rather a lot to say to each other." Outside the station he hailed a taxi and gave the driver an address which meant nothing to her. Meeting her glance of inquiry in the dimness within he smiled. "A firm of agents, who happen to have the key to the flat in Bede-st. mews. It's to let. No, don't worry, we're not going to take it. But I don't see any reason why we shouldn't have a prospective tenants' view, for all that. Do you?" "I think it's a terrific idea. But how did you know it was still to let?" "I didn't. Not until this morning. But I have a careful mind which considers every possibility. I looked through the most voluminous morning paper I could find—Sir John has it, no one else would—and found that agents were offering, among many other desirable properties, for sale or to let, a certain dwelling known as the Mews Plate, Bede-st. Ergo, that's the flat and I want to see." "But how do you know its the same one?" "We shall soon find out. What agent could resist telling a possible tenant that the last occupant of the flat was murdered?" "Wait a minute," said Molly. "I see a snag. How could a flat stay empty in London—London, of all places and have to be advertised?" "That's easily accounted for. They want three hundred pounds a year for it, furnished. People who can afford that want their location further west. Bede-st. isn't a bad locality, but the surroundings are arty rather than wealthy. The arty have no money as a rule—their's why they go arty, it's a form of sour-grapple self-defence—and the wealthy won't touch them with a barge pole. So the flat is still empty." He touched her hand, leaving a brief white finger-print upon the back of it. "Here's the office." It was child's play for a young couple, arriving by taxi, and noncommittally well dressed, to obtain the key of a flat which hung somewhat heavy upon its agent's hands. She admired the casual way that Severn asked his vital question, after the keen interest with which he had put those questions which would ordinarily have been important to a house-hunter, but which meant nothing to him. There was no eagerness, and very little curiosity, in the voice which asked at the last moment, as they were rising to leave the office. "By the way, didn't your last tenant make a rather spectacular exit from this mortal scene? I have an acquaintance who used to know the lady a little, and I remember her address was some mews off Bede-st." The man hesitated in doubt how to treat the inquiry. "Yes, Miss Daunt did have the flat, but the accident didn't happen there. She scarcely used it. She took it on a six months lease, but, poor lady, she only lived five or six weeks of the time." Severn laughed. "Oh, don't worry, we shan't be disturbed by ghosts." He slipped his hand possessively into Molly's arm. "Come along and we'll examine the place in detail." In the street he said softly into her ear: "So she took the flat furnished five or six weeks before she died. And she took it on a six months lease, which seems to indicate that she paid out a hundred and fifty pounds. And this happened—do you notice the implication?—just after her second visit to Montalban." "She was bleeding more than one member of that family," said Molly with conviction. "I think so. Yes, I think so. And yet if she had paid into her bank another large sum the four hundred and forty pounds she banked was by survival of a good deal more than five hundred. What did she do with the rest?" "Spent it," said Molly promptly. "On what? You must provide the feminine intuition." "Well, first and foremost, I should say clothes. You see, she was intending to marry Charles. She must have bought dresses galore." "But you forget that all the dressing-up in the world could be no disguise for those who already knew who Mailia Daunt really was." "No, I don't forget. They didn't matter. The person she had to keep in with was Charles himself. All this elaborate setting was for his benefit. I'm not suggesting, mind, that he wouldn't have fallen for her even if she'd been the poorest of the poor. But she chose her own way of representing herself and she chose this way—a lady of modest but sufficient private income, and with a good address in London. She was taking no chances." "I wonder what happened to her private possessions," said Severn pensively. "There's a job for Walden. He could find out what value in kind she had—clothes and all." "He could, and he must. Because it's my belief she took good care Charles shouldn't know too much about her until she had the setting ready for him; and the setting was got together on his people's money. What will you bet me she didn't receive Charles at her home for the first time after her second visit to his." "Nothing. You stand to win much too certainly. Poor creature, fancy going to all that trouble to 'capitulate' Charles. She couldn't have done it just as well with a clerk's job and last year's hat." Bede Street consisted largely of spacious studios, and the little cul-de-sac of the mews hid discreetly behind the one old house left in it, the sad ghost of a Queen Anne town house,

now turned into three very desirable flats. The mews was planted with little trees, and had a garden in the centre; but the half of it had been pulled down long ago, and a blank wall sealed the end of it at half its original length. There was left a large garage, with bright green double doors closed and locked; and over this, Mailia's flat, a stairway decorated at every step with shrubs in pots leading up to it. They went in. The flat justified its price. No one would have guessed from the cottage dress of it outside how large it was. There was an entrance hall, beautifully panelled in a light golden wood, a reception room, a dining-room, a very well-appointed kitchen, a bathroom in the coolest of jade-green and silver; two large bedrooms, and two small ones. All of which they examined with considerable interest; and Molly was speechless. "Do you know, Lawrence," she laughed. "I think we ought to take up blackmail as a career." "It certainly seems to pay. But the shame of it is, all the suggestion of Mailia is gone." They were standing in the principal bedroom. Mailia would certainly have chosen no other to enshrine her person. Severn moved about the room restlessly, opening and closing drawers in the dressing-table, and in the little writing desk. "Nothing—not a scrap of paper. Do you know something, Molly? She must have had a maid. The place would do with two, but let's be modest, and say one. I wonder—I wonder—what happened to Mailia's maid?" "But that was indeed something to wonder over." "The telephone!" cried Severn suddenly, snapping his fingers, and walked briskly into the hall where it stood upon a polished table. Molly followed him, mystified. "It will be cut off, of course." "Does it matter? There may still be a phone book, and there might be some notes." There was more than a directory. There was a pad for notes. He flicked back the leather cover of this message-book, which was attached to the stand of the telephone, and revealed a mass of half a dozen sheets folded back, a few torn out, and then the virgin pad. "You see? She was an untidy person—or else these were messages to which she wanted to refer again. Let's have a look what we've got." He sat down to it, and unfolded with care the first crumpled page. "The unmistakable Mailia. She had to remember a fitting at Marcantonio's at three-thirty on May 27th. That was after she came into her fortune, otherwise she couldn't have afforded to venture inside that brigand's doors. And she made an appointment with Georges to have her hair done on the 25th. And Carruther's man was due on the 25th, too. Did we say she was doing herself well? Half of this is clothes business, and the rest is the accessories of clothes." "Is that scrawl Mailia's?" asked Molly, looking over his shoulder. "Surely. The dates are all personal." And at that moment he had reached the last used page of the book, and they saw a hand which was certainly not Mailia's. The page was smooth, the hand demure. "The maid answered the telephone," said Severn. And a moment later: "This is one message Mailia never received. It was taken on the eve of her death—two days before she was to leave Montalban. Can you beat that?" They stared at it together, for it sounded an odd, an ominous note. "Mrs. Stephens, 14, Hawksbee-rd., Earl's Court, rang up, and left a message. Will Miss Daunt please settle with Mrs. Stephens for the month's board and lodging she owes as soon as convenient." Severn looked up with a wry smile. "Well, that's it." "Yes," said Molly slowly. She added: "We know now what happened to Mailia's maid." "Do we, though? I'm hanged if I see my way." "My dear man, it's so obvious. The girl was under notice when Mailia went away. How else dared she leave a message like that written on the telephone pad?" "It certainly cries to heaven of spite," admitted Severn. He smiled. "As you remarked. This must be funny, if one could get it in perspective." He closed the book. He rose. "Come along! We've finished here. There's nothing else for us."

Molly followed him obediently out of the hall, out of the flat, down the shrub-decorated stairway. "Where are we going, Lawrence?" "To see Mrs. Stephens, 14, Hawksbee-rd., Earl's Court. Or at any rate to have a look at the house where Mailia still owes a month's rent." Molly took his arm, laughing. "We're not looking for board lodgings, surely? Not after viewing that dazzling flat? How are the mighty fallen!" But there was no need to ask for lodgings. They had not sighted more than the gate of No. 14, Hawksbee-rd., before they knew what manner of house it was. Dainty-fronted, respectable to the last degree, blue-curtained, with a tree and a scrap of threadbare lawn before it. "This means she had next to no money before," said Molly. "Would the Mailias of this world stay in a house like that one day more than was necessary?" "Come on!" said Severn abruptly. "Let's return these keys to the agents, and then we'll have lunch. We shall get nothing more here." (To be Continued)

Death of Annette Carneau at St. Mary's Hospital South Porcupine, Feb. 25.—(Special to The Advance)—A little visitor from Warren, Annette Carneau, aged 1 year and 8 months died in St. Mary's Hospital, Timmins, on Sunday, Feb. 22nd. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Carneau, of Warren, who with their three small children were visiting their grandfather, Mr. Gauthier, of Crawford St., South Porcupine. The little girl who had not been strong from birth was taken ill on Saturday and was taken to St. Mary's where death followed. A funeral service was held on Monday in St. Joachim's church, South Porcupine, and conducted by Father LaSalle. Interment was made in Tisdale cemetery. Perth Courier.—To beat Nazidom requires more and more and better and better weapons; which means more and more money. Yours and mine. In Victory Bonds.

Something New in the Way of Birth Announcements Something new in birth announcements, as carried in the Weletka (Okla.) American: Announcement of Birth of Daughter Mr. and Mrs. Jack Ballew made the following announcement of the birth of a daughter in their home. THE BALLEW Production Co. Weletka, Oklahoma Announces the Judith III. Anniversary Model, released January 24, 1942. Jack Ballew, designer and chief engineer. Daisy Ballew, production manager. Dr. J. F. Shaw, technical assistant. Special features include: Short wheel base. 18"-6 3-4 pound frame. Two lung power. Free squealing. Streamlined body. V type motor. Suction Feed. Water cooled exhaust. Changeable seat covers. Present model will be constantly improved and refined, but annual models are not anticipated.

Former South Porcupine Teacher in the Air Force South Porcupine, March 4th. Special to The Advance. The following will be of interest to all who knew Don Simpson, the Public School teacher who enlisted in the Air Force last summer: In a letter recently he says: "I managed to lead my class at St. Johns (Quebec) and was given a lovely silver cigarette case with my name engraved on it and also got my name put up on the Observers' Wing in the hall of the school there. The case is a beauty and has the replica of an Anson on the outside. Inside it has engraved 'L.A.C. D. W. Simpson, winner of the Skyways trophy N.G.A. O.S.'" So I'm pretty well thrilled with it!" Toronto Telegram—Human nature is what makes a man go out on the limb in an effort to secure a political plum.

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Item from The Advance Travels to Old Country South Porcupine, March —(Special to The Advance)—Who was it who said—"A good deed goes echoing round the world?" One of the strangest coincidences is noted in the following facts. Mrs. E. K. Martin received a letter from England recently. She has kindly allowed us to quote a page from it:—"Have you one or more Chinese restaurant proprietors in South Porcupine? Only the other day I saw in a paper here how a doctor was travelling in Canada and picked up some rather weary looking soldiers. He thought they looked as if a meal would cheer them up so he took them into this restaurant run by the aforesaid Chinese gentleman and proceeded to have them refuelled. He then began to work out how much his bill would be. He reckoned 75 cents each, and when the proprietor said 15 cents the doctor thought he said 50 cents and thanked him for letting them have such an excellent meal at such a low figure. However, at last the doctor was made to understand it was only 15 cents, the Chinese saying—"You do your bit, the soldiers do their bit, and I do my bit!" "Does that ring true?" says the writer. "Does it! Don't we know it! Didn't it emanate from one of our own South Porcupine doctors himself, who modestly explained it this way: "This means that every human being in Australia, whether or not he or she likes it, is in the service of the Government." There is no plebiscite ahead of the Australians.	DAIRY Northland Producers Dairy Pasteurized Milk Cream Buttermilk The Farmer Owned Dairy 14 Birch St. N. Phone 3200	INSURANCE CONSULT US FOR New Low Rates on Fire Insurance Auto Life Casualty P. J. Doyle 21 Cedar St. N. Phone 1330	TAILOR International Tailors Agents for TIP-TOP TAILORS and W. R. JOHNSTON 27 1/2 First Avenue Phone 1062 Schumacher
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