

# ASK NO QUESTIONS!

By BELDON DUFF

## SYNOPSIS.

Annassa West leases Bride's House, in Connecticut, so called because a bride who had sought shelter there with her husband, had strangely disappeared. The lease specified that the tenant must ask no questions. Annassa finds that one of the graves in the private burial ground has been opened. Her stable boy, Otto, is murdered. John Diamond, owner of a New York newspaper, tries to induce Annassa to leave the place. Derrick Cranson, a former circus athlete, and admirer of Jane Funnells, one of the first tenants of the house, takes care of Annassa's polo ponies. A deputy is put on guard in the kitchen. Annassa, in the night, sees a stranger riding Dracula. There is the sound of an explosion, and Miss Farth, Ann's housekeeper, calls out that the deputy has been murdered. The women start through the woods for Cranson's place.

## CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd.)

A sudden sympathy for the little doctor welled up in Annassa's heart. No wonder he was a bit touched in the head. A man of some education and of a certain refinement to have come to this! What trick of fate had brought him to seek such seclusion? What disappointment? What sorrow? Her own worries for the moment forgotten, she walked over to the house, climbed the steps to the rotting porch, and saw that the door yawned open. Through it crooked frame the interior, or that portion of the interior disclosed by the light which filtered in through the one window, looked even more depressing than the exterior had.

Miss West laid her knuckles to a panel and rapped smartly. There was no response. "May I come in?" Still no response. She stepped inside.

"Mr. Cranson, I'm Miss West. We're in trouble up at our house. You said I might call on you."

From close at hand came the rustle of paper as something big and black scuttled along the opposite wall and up on a sort of desk or cupboard in the corner. A cat, she told herself. And presently this surmise was confirmed by a yowl, the phosphorescent gleam of yellow, resentful eyes. Her heart had just begun to beat normally again when from the ceiling just overhead came a muffled tap-tap. Twice with an interval between, the tapping was repeated. It was a stealthy sound, and in those surroundings, sinister. The girl stepped back to the door and looked out over the untidy yard, bright as noonday in the moonlight. Empty egg crates. Soda bottles. Tin cans. A dog house without a dog. The spare parts of many automobiles. What was there in these things to make one feel afraid?

At that moment the veterinary, clothed as she had last seen him in his green frock coat and tall hat, emerged from the woods. She opened her mouth to cry out to him, but the feeling of relief his appearance had awakened changed to one of uneasiness.

There was a woman with him, and such a woman! A poor, neglected-looking female, dressed from head to foot in rusty black; garments that had neither shape nor pattern, but hung from her emaciated form in every conceivable length, fluttering like the ceremonial rags of a scarecrow. Even her face, oddly enough, was covered. In a desultory, half-hearted sort of way this creature was giving the veterinary quite a tussle. Her cries were scarcely human either—raucous hoofs, unintelligible shouts. As they drew nearer, the meaning of this extraordinary behavior became apparent. The poor thing was either drunk or drugged or both.

Under no circumstances must the little doctor know he had had a witness to this scene. No matter how pressing the necessity at Bride's House might be, Miss West's sense of delicacy demanded that she slip away as unannounced as she had come. But at least the question of Dr. Cranson's strange choice of habitation had been settled. It was clear, from the liveness he had exhibited throughout, that the solitary shack in the woods had been selected as a refuge—a haven in which to hide a thing much loved from the eyes of an unsympathetic world.

The couple had by this time reached the steps that led to the porch. Fortunately they were too absorbed in their grotesque harlequinade to have eye or ear for anything else.

The girl slipped back into the house and found, as she had hoped, that there was a rear door as well as a front one. In a few seconds, she had put the distressing scene behind her. Excited by the incident, she completely forgot the danger lurking in the boggy ground between Cranson's house and the south pasture. Flying on light feet, the narrow strip of woods had been all but crossed; and Annassa had caught a glimpse of Abby passing restlessly back and forth beside the old burying ground, when a tuft of moss gave as she jumped on it. If the branch to which she had been holding had not snapped at the same time, her weight could have been shifted quickly enough to avoid trouble. As it was, she found herself up to her ankles in what felt like cold, sticky dough. At first it did not promise to be so terrible. It was not until she made a move to get out that the real

sinking began—only an inch or two, but a rather ominous inch when one remembered about those plow horses. It was like all quicksand; the more she worked, the deeper she went. Soon the mud sucked about her knees.

The situation, as it dawned, was too hideous to seem real—to real to be a product of the imagination. Darkness. The Unknown. Afilthy, creeping death. And worse than all else, emptiness. Even the trees, once so oppressively close, had retired beyond reach, their dim shapes, aloof and impersonal, as witness in a death chamber.

"Abby!" she called, and knew the Scotchwoman did not hear—would probably never hear. Only her body, from the waist up, was free now. Caught in that strangely yielding vise, the rest of her had lost the power to move. And as her bodily strength failed, her mind conjured up a panorama of events from the past; the old house in which she had been born; a hazy picture of her mother lying still and white in a bed of flowers; her first pony. The father who had taught her to ride.

"Daddy, you couldn't see this happen to your little girl!" It was the appeal she had always made when a threatened punishment promised to be too humiliating to be borne with dignity. It was an appeal that had never failed. It did not fail now.

From somewhere close at hand came a deep male voice:

"Stop struggling, you little idiot, and I'll have you out in a jiffy!"

A. air of hands were thrust under her arm pits, a leverage exerted. Slowly, and with as little discomfort as possible under the circumstances, she was drawn from the hungry mud and set on her feet, none the worse for her harrowing experience except that she had lost both shoes. Even the minor discomfort was discounted when, without a word, her rescuer caught her up in his powerful arms, cradled her through the remaining few feet of woods, over the stone wall and to the south pasture where Abby still kept agitated vigil. Once solid ground had been put beneath her feet he stepped back, his hands clenched at his sides in an attitude which, while not exactly sheepish, nor yet self-satisfied, appeared to be a quite unexplainable blend of both.

Annassa West looked up. The man to whom she owed her life was Dracula's night rider—the mysterious stranger. And swift on the heels of this discovery came the feeling that he was not unknown to her, that she had seen him before the pasture episode, seen him close, like this, towering over her. It was a fleeting impression, gone as soon as it had come, but it served to quicken the interest he had already aroused. She had scarcely had time to murmur more than a conventional "thank you" when the loud and insistent honking of a motor horn from the direction of the house announced the arrival of some unexpected reinforcements, probably from the Crossing; and with a start the girl remembered the cause of her recent predicament.

"Oh!" she cried, "the watchman—the dead watchman in the fireplace!" "Watchman! Dead!" Her rescuer's whole attitude changed. Disbelief—uneasiness—fear: they stole across his face like ripples over the surface of a lake. He was, she saw, prepared for flight; and instinctively her hand shot out to detain him. Catching at the first thing that came within reach—a fold of the loose flannel shirt—she hung on while he struggled to be free.

"A dead man! The fireplace!" Suddenly his every muscle galvanized into action. There came a savage jerk. Cloth ripped. Buttons gave. The shirt slid down from one shoulder, exposing a bronzed and brawny chest on which was a splash of something which had a dark and ugly look in the moonlight.

"Let me go!" With one hand the man sought to draw the shirt back into place. With the other he wrenched himself free. Then, as though some gentler instinct prompted him to wipe from her mind the impression he had just created, he stooped and, catching the fingers which had sought to detain him, brushed them lightly against his lips. The next moment he was gone.

## CHAPTER X.

It was high noon, Monday. Alva Cropsey paused in the midst of packing for his summer vacation, which was supposed to have started the Saturday before, to admire the early edition of the New York Daily Free Press, a copy of which lay on his bed. A special inserted just before the papers went out to the newsstands bore the announcement in scarce type:

## TWO DEATHS IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS!

Mystery in Hales Crossing Deepens! His prophecy had been fulfilled sooner than he expected. The Free Press was running some exclusive, front-page murder stuff. Not so bad for a newspaper that had always had the reputation of being a shade too conservative.

A mysterious telephone message around midnight had made the scoop possible—a message which Cropsey had taken the precaution to verify by calling up the chief of police at the Crossing. Though why John Diamond should have gotten so riled up about his doing so, when he himself could not be reached at Berkshire Towers to get the confirmation first hand, was more than his managing editor could exactly fathom. What he did know, however, was that the owner of the Free Press had driven down before daylight and raised hell all over the office.

(To be continued.)

## With Indians in the Black Hills

We travelled eastward for two days, and then the gloomy ridges of the Black Hills rose up before us. The village passed along for some miles beneath their declivities, trailing out to a great length; over the arid prairie, or winding among small detached hills of distorted shapes. Turning sharply to the left, we entered a wide defile of the mountains, down the bottom of which a brook came winding, lined with tall grass and dense copses, amid which were hidden many beaver dams and lodges. We passed along between two lines of high precipices and rocks piled in disorder one upon another, with scarcely a tree, a bush, or a clump of grass. The restless Indian boys wandered along their edges and clambered up and down their rugged sides, and sometimes a group of them would stand on the verge of a cliff and look down on the procession as it passed beneath. As we advanced, the passage grew more narrow; then it suddenly expanded into a round grassy meadow, completely encompassed by mountains; and here the families stopped as they came up in turn, and the camp rose like magic.

The lodges were hardly pitched when, with their usual precipitation, the Indians set about accomplishing the object that had brought them there; that is, obtaining poles for their new lodges. Half the population, men, women, and boys, mounted their horses and set out for the depths of the mountains. It was a strange cavalcade, as they rode at full gallop over the stinging rocks and into the dark opening of the defile beyond. We passed between precipices, sharp and splintering at the tops, their sides beeling over the defile or descending in abrupt declivities, bristling with fir-trees. On our left they rose close to us like a wall, but on the right a winding brook with a narrow strip of marshy soil intervened. The stream was clogged with old beaver-dams, and spread frequently into wide pools.

After having ridden in this manner six or eight miles, the scene changed, and all the declivities were covered with forests of tall, slender spruce-trees. The Indians began to fall off to the right and left, dispersing with their hatchets and knives to cut the poles which they had come to seek. I was soon left almost alone; but in the stillness of those lonely mountains, the stroke of hatchets and the sound of voices might be heard from far and near. Wild as they were, these mountains were thickly peopled. As I climbed farther, I found the broad dusty paths made by the elk, as they filed across the mountain side. The grass on all the terraces was trampled down by deer; there were numerous tracks of wolves, and in some of the rougher and more precipitous parts of the ascent, I found foot-prints different from any that I had ever seen, and which I took to be those of the Rocky Mountain sheep. I sat down upon a rock; there was a perfect stillness. No wind was stirring, and not even an insect could be heard.—From "The Oregon Trail," by Francis Parkman.

## Suited

A firm advertised for a girl clerk, and the next morning hundreds of applicants arrived. So numerous were they that the chief told the office-boy to admit no more.

Shortly after this an aggressive woman arrived, and, pushing her way past the others, asked to see the chief. By this time the office-boy had grown deaf to all protestations, and had but one answer.

"Not today, madam," he said.

"But I'm his wife," she said majestically.

"Not today, madam," was the inexorable reply.

A judge was pointing out that a witness was not necessarily to be regarded as untruthful because he altered a statement he had previously made. "For instance," he said, "when I entered this Court to-day I could have sworn that I had my watch in my pocket. But then I remembered I had left it in the bathroom at home." When the judge got home that night his wife said: "Why all this bother about your watch—sending four or five men for it?" "Good heavens!" said the judge; "I never sent anyone! What did you do?" "I gave it to the first one who came; he knew just where it was."

Love and esteem are the first principles of friendship, which always is imperfect where either of these two is wanting.

## Five Fathoms Deep

Paul Brown in Field and Stream, July, '32.

The waters of the Bay of Gonaive (Haiti) were fairly quiet. Our small boat rose and fell gently on the swells as I stepped over the side and descended the ladder. As my shoulders approached the water I stopped, and the heavy copper helmet was slipped over my head and fastened under my arms. I could see the grinning black natives start work at the pump and hear the slight hiss of the air escaping through the valve over my head. A slap on the helmet told me all was five fathoms beneath the surface.

I landed in a new world—an incredibly beautiful and fantastic world where everyone of my preconceived notions was wrong. Even walking I had to learn all over again. A step could not be taken quickly. A small jump was likely to be extended to a flying leap which carried far beyond the original objective but very slowly. Arms and hands had to be moved deliberately. The light from the surface was a soft glow, permeating everything, an illumination without shadows.

At my feet, as I landed, a hermit crab scuttled into its usurped shell, camouflaged with a waving anemone, and lumbered away. A big starfish contracted and simply disappeared. Ahead of me was a miniature fairy castle, etched in moral with moats and ports and bastioned towers. It was inhabited by gay little fishes gorgeous with all the colors of the primary spectrum. They swam in schools from their protective fissures to the very glass in the front of my helmet and peered in at me with motionless eyes. Then, suddenly, they all departed as if by signal. Almost at once they were replaced by a small group of parrot-fish—great, vividly shaded creatures with beaks that enabled them to wrench knobs of coral from the reef and lurch on the small fish and crustaceans that their housewrecking activities disclosed. Then a small shark, perhaps five feet long, swam past lazily. For a long moment it stared at me, but as I reached for the threatening spear which swung from the belt of my bathing suit and backed toward the coral cliff behind me, it swam away into the dusky oblivion 30 feet from me.

As I approached, the coral had suddenly changed from a glowing mass of yellow and lavender and orange mosaic into a uniform pinkish brown! I leaned forward. The entire surface of the coral cliff was covered with sea worms. These worms live in tubes of their own construction, which they anchor to their host and into which they disappear at the slightest notice. These tubes, which looked for all the world like gray and irregular clay pipe stems, were soft and yielding. The tops were tightly closed, and there was no sign that beautiful flower-like animals were concealed within. I leaned my shoulder against the coral while I pried one of them from the cliff. Instantly the whole color scheme of the reef changed again as the minute pinkish polyps flashed into their stony shelters and left me gazing at the pure whiteness of the coral itself.

Then a big grouper came idling through the fissures of the reef and flitted its tail at me. Presently I became aware of many groupers around me. I hauled from my pocket a six-foot piece of fishing line fitted with a heavy hook, and baited it with a small crab. The tide carried the baited hook toward the feeding groupers. A two-foot grouper looked at it just once and then calmly swallowed it. I struck. The fish struck back, then went insane in a mad series of whirling, flashing, twisting contortions at the end of my short line. I became enormously concerned in that remaining upright. That two-foot fish gave me a battle I would not have believed possible. Later I realized this was due to my own inability to move rapidly. I was in the midst of a school of groupers that, with their businesslike teeth, could have made a hospital case of me had they attacked together. As my catch grew weaker, one of this school of groupers bit a huge chunk from the captive's tail. Instantly a general attack was launched at the injured fish, and before I could haul it to me there was little more than the head left on the hook. The eternal voraciousness of the creatures of the sea was never more graphically illustrated.

In the meantime the appearance of the sea bottom had changed. The chrysanthemums, gardenias, gently waving nasturtiums and gay little asters that are the living animals of the sea, had withdrawn into their protective homes. I sat down on a brownish violet stool equipped with a soft cushion—to find it a sponge that quivered beneath me. I changed to a large lump of brain coral and watched the seascape unfold and come to life again. A Jewish, awkward and hideous, billowed past. A number of little puffers, their spiny bodies looking like overgrown chestnut burrs, went on their leisurely way unmolested. Red snappers suddenly became frequent members of the milling fish before me and I caught at least 20.

It was sport of the best kind. I could never be sure whether or not the fish would upset me and let a rush of water into my helmet; never be certain that the line about my

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wrist would not cut deeply enough to bring blood, which would have been dangerous; nor be sure that the larger fish would not attack me.

I had no idea how long I had been submerged. My fingers had already assumed the "washer-woman wrinkles" state which is usually a signal to ascend. But I still wanted to see what was around the bend of the reef, and started for the edge of the coral growth which jutted into deeper water. As I rounded the bend a veritable marine garden opened before me. Weeds and grasses grew in lovely, gracefully swaying luxuriance. Brown and violet chimney sponges sprouted from shafts of volcanic rock. Elkhorn coral flung its arms about with embracing picturesqueness. A brilliant butterfly-fish, tiny and almost iridescent, swam past—then another, then many, all concerned with something that was beyond my ken.

I watched these fish as they rounded the corner of the reef and disappeared, but while I looked one of them disappeared forever. It swam just a bit too close to one of the large "flowers," which was a tube worm. As soon as the sensitive feelers of the worm (which were the petals of the flower) felt the passing fish it closed like lightning and took the tiny fish into the maw that was at the same time its protecting tube.

As I watched the process, I slowly realized that a lengthy shadow had appeared just beyond the coral. I peered again—and found myself staring at a six-foot barracuda! It was surveying me with motionless, hollow-looking eyes. For a moment I was powerless to move. The shark that had passed didn't really frighten me, but the barracuda did. Everything depended upon what this savage torpedo-shaped killer decided to do with me, and not what I decided to do. Then I realized that I had failed to roll up the fishing line, which still sported a chunk of crab dangling from the hook. The current had slowly lifted the bait toward the barracuda. I was actually fishing for the beast, but I certainly didn't want to catch it. I was only hoping it would decide not to catch me. I twitched the hook toward me, intending to get the line stowed away before the big murderer had a chance to bite. But the barracuda moved faster than the hook and grabbed the bait. I tried to snatch the line to me, and thereby set the hook in the barracuda's jaw.

With a terrific, wrenching surge the fish started away. I was pulled to my knees, falling slowly, like a man in a slow-motion movie. When I landed flat on the bottom, the sea started gurgling into my helmet. It was splashing around my nose before I could struggle to a kneeling position. All the while, the terror at the end of my line, pulling and wrenching my arm, was an almost indistinguishable blur because of the frenzy of its efforts to escape the hook.

I reached desperately for my trident, vaguely intending to slide it down the line until it penetrated the head of the plunging barracuda. But I could not hold the trident against the line, for the fighting fish started dashing from right to left. I tried to slip the line from about my wrist, but was unable to; neither could I cut it with the trident. While I was frantically wondering what I could do, I was suddenly knocked back on my haunches. The fish had struck at my helmet! Only the fact that it hit the copper rather than the glass, saved me.

Tired and hurt, I hooked by arm about a jutting piece of tube coral, made a blind stab toward the swirling blur and felt the steel strike home! Again and again I stabbed toward where I knew the fish must be, and eventually I felt the strain on my arm

and wrist lessen. Cautiously I pulled in my almost nerveless arm until I could catch the line with my other hand, then slowly I manoeuvred the fish into position close to the bottom. I thrust the trident against it and leaned on the handle. The fish gave one fearful convulsive struggle, which almost threw me on the bottom again. Then it rolled over and floated, belly up, in the current.

Slowly and painfully I wound my way through the blank area which had been so beautiful when the fight started. I was unable to find the rope leading to the surface, or the anchor chain, and I was still too exercised to hunt must for them. I wanted to go up—and up I went, hand over hand up the air line and light rope leading to my helmet. And so I emerged with the dead barracuda dangling from my cut and bleeding wrist, my trident still protruding from its head.

That was the first of many dives I made off the coral reefs of Haiti. Diving in shallow water on reefs or beside them, where fish are sure to be numerous, is one of the greatest experiences an angler can have. Sharks pass so often they are disregarded; and there seems to be no real danger—except for the occasional voracious barracuda!

## "Whistling" Pigeons

Travelers in the north woods of Ontario next Summer may be astonished when they hear and see what they may take to be a new species of bird, and into their heads may pop visions of whistling swans and wild pigeons, says the Department of the Interior at Ottawa. They may see the birds, real pigeons, and hear the whistle, but the two are separate entities, joined, it is true, but only for a space and then to carry out an idea.

Next Spring, after a period of training, teams of homing pigeons will be transported to various fire patrol points where communication by wireless is now difficult or impossible. Reports of fires, forced landings and important messages may be relayed by the use of these birds to the base camps of the Provincial Air Force. The whistle: That is to scare away hawks and other predatory birds that might attack the homers, and is attached to their legs along with identification tags.

Trust in God implies trust in one's self as God's agent. The Christians who have the most serene faith that God's kingdom will some time come upon the earth are those who are doing something to make it come. They make effort themselves because God is making use of their efforts. They have courage to work, because they know that it is God that worketh in them.

He was making plans for an autumn holiday, and visited a travel agency to discuss details. "You'd better take one of our pamphlets, 'Where To Go and Where To Stay,'" said the young man behind the counter. "Thanks, I won't trouble," replied the visitor. "My taxi-driver told me that last night."

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## What Every Woman Should Know

No Fear of Cancer of the Breast If Examined Immediately Irritation is Present

There is no better sign of the average high intelligence of the women of this country and no better evidence of the value of publicity and of correct information in the daily press than the change that has taken place in the status of cancer of the breast today as compared with thirty years before in the decade between 1890 and 1900.

Before 1900 and since 1890 the operative treatment for cancer of the breast was perfected. Yet, during that decade, in the best clinics of civilized countries throughout the world the actual incidence of cancer among every hundred women entering the clinic complaining of some trouble in the breast was eighty. Today, in a number of clinics in this country, in localities where there has been publicity through the daily press for seventeen years, the incidence of cancer has fallen from eighty to seventeen, the hopeless cases of cancer have risen from more than fifty to less than five per cent, and the actual five year cures have risen from less than ten to more than sixty per cent. This tremendous change for the better has nothing to do with improvement in surgery or the advent of radiation (x-ray or radium). But it cannot be accomplished unless the diagnosis of the surgery and the irradiation are of the best that can be obtained anywhere.

The enlightened woman should have no fear of cancer of the breast, if she reports for an examination the moment she observed anything unusual in the breast or nipple, or in the region of the armpit or axilla. It is safe to pay attention to anything unusual, no matter how insignificant—pain without a lump, a lump without pain, any change in the nipple any irritation, any discharge from the nipple, pulling in of the nipple anything that can be felt in the breast, like a cake, or something that could not be felt before; any lump under the armpit. Go at once to your family physician and request a thorough examination. If you are properly educated, you will have selected your medical adviser, your breast will have been examined at the last periodic examination and your personal physician will be familiar with the normal condition of your breast. In a large number of cases of this kind your selected family physician will be able to decide that the condition of the breast which has attracted your attention has no relation to cancer, and, except for irritations of the nipple, no treatment is necessary. The treatment is necessary of the nipple is discussed in another paper of this series and has already been published.

In a certain portion of the cases the general practitioner, after examining your breast will decide that it is safer for you to be studied by a specialist. In a group of one hundred women who seek an examination the moment they are warned and, after being examined by one or both doctors, the chances are that seventy-five per cent or more will require no operation or irradiation. From the standpoint of greatest safety and protection, a number will be requested to return for a second examination. Among this enlightened group of women properly examined, in about twenty-five per cent there will be a definite lump and a simple operation in a hospital will become necessary. In lumps of this kind it is impossible to detect the presence of cancer by any method of examination previous to operation. Do not consent to any form of post-test for cancer or preliminary treatment with any serum, for protection against cancer. Your surgeon should tell you before the operation that there are just two kinds of lumps. In one you remove the lump only and save the breast. In the other you remove the breast by the complete operation as the best protection against a return and the best assurance of a permanent cure. In addition, in some instances it is a good plan after operation to have protective irradiation with x-rays or radium.

Women who have borne children should be best protected, because they will become familiar with the value of periodic examination before and after the birth of their children. They will be instructed as to the absolute necessity for protection against cancer of the cervix to submit to periodic pelvic examinations, and at this time the physician should examine the breasts and give them the correct information that every woman should have about the care of her breast and nipples. Publicity in regard to the breast the skin and the mouth is giving evidence of its value. In many of the clinics of this country today, and in the chief reason for these articles—(The distribution of these articles in this province has been approved by the Provincial Department of Health.)

Film Star (newly married)—"And is this your home?" Bridgroom—"It is precious." "Say, it looks mighty fine. Are you sure I haven't married you before?"