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Is one that assists Nature. Regular and natural action of the stomach, liver, kidneys and bowels will keep you well and fit, and this action is promoted by

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Upper Lohave, N. S., Can., "I wish to thank you for the benefit I received by taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for female troubles from which I was a great sufferer, so that I was completely sun down in health. Other medicine did not help me, but Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound made me well and strong. I now have a big, hearty baby boy, and praise your medicine for the wonderful lot of good it has done me." Mrs. ISABEL BECK, JR., Upper Lohave, Lunenburg Co., N. S., Canada.

The darkest days of husband and wife are when they come to look forward to a children and lonely old age. Many a wife has found herself incapable of motherhood owing to some derangement of the feminine system, often curable by the proper remedies. In many homes once children there are now children because of the fact that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound makes women normal. If you have the slightest doubt that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will help you, write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (Confidential) Lynn, Mass., for advice. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman, and held in strict confidence.

The BLACK BOX

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Author of "Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo," "The Vanished Messenger," "The Lighted Way," etc.

Novelized from the motion picture drama of the same name produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company. Illustrated with photographs from the motion picture production.

SYNOPSIS.

Sanford Quest, master criminologist of the world, finds that in bringing to justice Macdonald, the murderer of Lord Ashleigh's daughter, he has just begun a life-and-death struggle with a mysterious master criminal. In a hidden but Professor Ashleigh's garden he has seen an ephebe skeleton, and a living creature, half monkey, half man, destroyed by fire. In his rooms have appeared black crosses containing notes, signed by a pair of armless hands. Laura and Lenora, his assistants, suspect Craig, the professor's assistant, of a double murder. The black boxes continue to appear in uncanny fashion. Craig is trapped, but escapes to a room where Quest, Lenora and the professor follow him. Lord Ashleigh is murdered by the Hands. Lenora is captured, escapes to Port Said. Quest and his party follow, and beyond the desert. They are captured by Mongars, escape with Craig, and their captives turn him over to Inspector French in San Francisco. He escapes from French in a train wreck and is chased by the party across the Mexican line.

THIRTEENTH INSTALLMENT

TONGUES OF FLAME.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

From the shadows of the trees on the farther side of the river, Craig with strained eyes watched Quest's struggle. He saw him reach Lenora, watched him struggle to the bank with her, waited until he had lifted her on to his horse. Then he turned slowly around and faced the one country in the world where freedom was still possible for him. He looked into the wall of darkness, penetrated only at one spot by a little blaze of light. Slowly, with his arm through the bridle of his horse, he limped towards it. As he drew nearer and discovered its source, he hesitated. The light came through the uncurtained windows of a saloon, three long, yellow shafts illuminating the stunted shrubs and sandy places. Craig kept in the shadow between them and drew a little nearer. From inside he could hear the thumping of a worn piano, the twanging of a guitar, the rattle of glasses, the uproarious shouting of men, the shrill laughter of women. The tired men and the lame horse stole reluctantly a little nearer. Craig listened once more wearily. It was home he longed for so much—and rest. The very thought of the place sickened him. Even when he reached the door, he hesitated and instead of entering stood back amongst the shadows. If only he could find any other sort of shelter!

Inside, the scene was ordinary enough. There was a long bar, against which were lounging half a dozen typical Mexican cowboys. There was a small space cleared for dancing, at the farther end of which two performers were making weird but vehement music. Three girls were dancing with cowboys, not ungraciously considering the state of the floor and the frequent discards in the music. One of them—the prettiest—stopped abruptly and pushed her partner away from her.

"You have drunk too much, Jose!" she exclaimed. "You cannot dance. You tread on my feet and you lean against me. I do not like it. I will dance with you another night when you are sober. Go away, please."

Her cavalier away for a moment on his feet. Then he looked down upon her with an evil glitter in his eyes. He was tall and thin, with a black mustache and yellow, unpleasant looking teeth.

"So you will not dance any longer with Jose?" he muttered. "Very well, you shall drink with him, then. We will sit together at one of those little tables. Listen, you shall drink wine."

"I do not want to drink wine with you. All that I wish is to be left alone," the girl insisted, curtly. "Go and play cards, if you want to. There is Pietro over there, and Diego. Perhaps you may win some money. They say that drunkards have all the luck."

Jose leered at her. "Presently I will play cards," he said. "Presently I will win all their money and I will buy jewelry for you, Marta—stones that look like diamonds and will sparkle in your neck and in your hair."

She turned disdainfully away. "I do not want your jewelry, Jose," she declared.

He caught her suddenly by the wrist. "Perhaps this is what you want," he cried, as he stooped down to kiss her.

She swung her right hand round and struck him on the face. He staggered back for a moment. There was a red flush which showed through the tan of his cheek. Then he drew a little nearer to her, and before she could escape had passed his long arm around her body. He drew her to the chair placed by the side of the wall. His left hand played with the knife at his belt.

"Marta, little sweetheart," he said, mockingly, "you must pay for that blow. Don't be afraid," he went on, as he drew the knife across his leather breeches. "A little scratch across your cheek, so! It is but the brand of your master, a love token from Jose. Steady, now, little Mavrick!"

The girl struggled violently, but Jose was strong; such bravado were

in light and gaiety. You are safe here, whatever your troubles may have been. You say that you have money, and if you are lonely," she added, dropping her voice, "you need not go alone."

He patted her hand affectionately, but there was something a little forced about the action.

"Child, he said, "it is so hard to make you understand. I might lose myself for a few minutes, it is true, over yonder. Perhaps, even," he added, "you might help me to forget. And then there would be the awakening. That is always the same. Sometimes at night I sleep, and when I sleep I rest, and when my eyes are opened in the morning the weight comes back and sits upon my heart, and the strength seems to pass from my limbs and the will from my brain."

Her eyes were soft and her voice shook a little as she leaned towards him. "Something in his helplessness had kindled the protective spirit in her.

"Has life been so terrible for you?" she whispered. "Have you left behind—not you never could have been really wicked. You are not very old, are you? Why do you not stand up and be a man? If you have done wrong, then very likely people have done wrong things to you. Why should you brood over these memories? Why—What are you looking at? Who are these people?"

The professor, with Quest and Long Jim, suddenly appeared round the corner of the building. They walked towards Craig. He shrank back in his place.

"If these are your enemies," the girl cried, fiercely, "remember that they cannot touch you here. I'll have the boys out in a minute, if they dare to try it."

Craig struggled to his feet. He made no answer. His eyes were fixed upon the professor's. The girl passed her arm through his and dragged him into the saloon. They passed Jose in the doorway. He scoffed at them.

"Say, the boss will fire you, Marta, if you waste all your time with that Yankee," he muttered.

Marta drew the red rose from the bosom of her dress and placed it in Craig's buttonhole. Then she led him without a word to a seat.

"If these men try any tricks in here," she said, "there'll be trouble."

Almost at that moment they all three entered. Long Jim nodded to Craig in friendly fashion.

"It's all right, cookie," he told them. "Don't you look so scared. This is just a bit of parleyvous business, that's all."

The professor held out a piece of paper. He handed it over to Craig.

"Craig," he announced, "this is a dispatch which I found in Allguez with my letters. It is addressed to you, but under the circumstances you will scarcely wonder that I opened it. You had better read it."

Craig accepted the cable form and read it through slowly to himself.

To John Craig, Care Prof Lord Ashleigh, Yorkers, New York: Your sister died today. Her daughter Mary sails on Tuesday to join you in New York. Please meet her.

COMPTON, Solicitor, London. Craig sat for a moment as though stunned. The girl leaned over towards him.

"Are they trying to take you on a warrant?" she whispered. "Remember,

"I have sinned and I must pay!" you don't need to go unless you want to."

Craig shook his head. "This is something quite different," he explained. "Leave me for a moment, Marta. I must talk to these people."

She slipped regretfully away from his side and out into the darkness. He sat with his eyes fixed upon the cablegram. Then he turned towards Quest.

"Fate seems to be too strong for me," he admitted. "Leave me alone and I promise you that I'll go to once to New York, settle Mary's future and then make a full disclosure."

Jim touched him on the shoulder. "Remember," he told him, "you ain't no call to leave here unless you want to. Those deputies don't go this



"Four Ribs Broken," Pronounced the Professor. "She Cannot Be Moved for a Week."

side of the border. You're safe as long as you like to stay."

"All the same," he said, "I fear that I must go."

The professor coughed. "I am sure, Craig," he declared, "that you have decided wisely."

"There is nothing else for me to do," he said. "The child must be met and looked after. Besides, I am sick of it all. You may as well know the truth."

"Why not now?" Quest suggested, softly.

"In New York," Craig replied, "and not before."

Quest and the professor exchanged meaningful glances.

"Very well," the former decided, turning away. "In a week from today, Craig, I shall expect you to report at the professor's house."

They left the room together. Long Jim lingered by Craig's side.

"Those guys have been scaring you some, I guess," he remarked. "For get 'em, cookie. They can't touch you here. Of course, if you go to New York it's your own show."

"I know that," Craig replied, gloomily.

One of the girls passed her arm through Long Jim's.

"Just one dance," she whispered. He hesitated, looking out of the window. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm tired of those guys," he remarked to Craig, with a grin. "Guess I'll stay here for a bit."

Craig was left alone for a few minutes. Suddenly Marta glided in and sat by his side. Her eyes were flashing with anger.

"You know what they said, those two, as they passed out?" she whispered, hoarsely. "I heard them. They are going to board the 8:30 train tomorrow morning. The dark man turned and said to the other: 'If he is not on that, we'll wait till we find him. Once we get him in New York, he's our man.'"

A little exclamation of anger broke from Craig's lips. The girl caught at his arm.

"Don't go," she begged. "Don't go. There are plenty of places near here where you can hide, where we could go together and live quite simply. I'd work for you. Take me away from this, somewhere over the hills. Don't go to New York. They are cruel, those men. They are hunting you—I can see it in their faces."

"Little girl," he said, "I should like to go with you along that valley and over the hills and forget that I had ever lived in any other world. But I can't do it. There's a child there now, on the ocean, nearer to New York every day, my sister's own child and no one to meet her. And—there are the other things. I have sinned and I must pay. . . . My God!"

The room suddenly rang with Marta's shriek. Through the open window by which they were sitting, an arm wrapped in a serape had suddenly hovered over them. Craig, in starting back, had just escaped the downward blow of the knife, which had buried itself in Marta's arm. She fell back, screaming.

"It's Jose!" she cried. "The brute! The beast!"

Craig swung to his feet, furious. Long Jim, cursing fiercely, drew his gun. At that moment the door of the saloon was thrown open. Jose came reeling in, his serape over his shoulder, a drunken grin on his face. He staggered towards them.

an hour ought to do it, the boys say." They walked outside to the camp, where the cowboys were finishing their breakfast.

"Say, boss," one of them called out, "you're not making that 8:30 train to New York?"

"Why not?" Quest asked, quickly. "It's only three-quarters of an hour's ride, is it?"

"Maybe not," the other replied, "but as it's eight now, your chances ain't looking lively. Kind of overcast, haven't you?"

Both men glanced once more at their watches. Then Quest thrust his back with a little oath.

"Our watches have been set back!" he exclaimed. "The Hands again!"

For a moment they looked at one another, dumfounded. Then Quest moved towards the corral.

"Say, is there any quicker way to the depot?" he inquired of the cowboys.

They heard his question indifferently.

"Fifty dollars," Quest continued, "to anyone who can take me by a quicker route."

One of them rose slowly to his feet. "Waal," he observed, "fifty dollars would come in kind of handy. Yes I reckon I can cut off a mile or two for you."

"Fifty dollars for you, then," Quest replied, as they hurried towards the horses, "and an extra ten if we make the train."

They galloped off into the distance. The cowboys finished their breakfast and went off to their work. Laura stole out from her tent and started off in rather a shameful manner for a walk. Presently Lenora opened her eyes. She, too, stretched out her hand for her watch. Suddenly she sat up in bed with a little exclamation.

On the table by her side was a small black box. She took off the lid with trembling fingers, drew out a scrap of paper and read.

Foot! Tongues of flame will cross Quest's path. He will never reach the depot alive.

Lenora glanced at Laura's empty bed. Then she staggered to the opening of the tent.

"Laura!" she cried.

There was no one there. The cowboys had all gone to their work. Laura had passed out of sight across the ridge in the distance. Lenora staggered to the cook wagon, where the Chinese cook was sitting cleaning plates.

"Listen!" she cried. "They are in danger, the three men who have gone off to the depot! If you'll ride after them, I will give you a hundred dollars. Give them this," she added, holding out the scrap of paper.

The Chinaman shook his head. He glanced at the slip of paper indifferently and went on with his work.

"No can ride, missie," he said.

Lenora looked around helplessly. The camp was empty. She staggered across towards her own horse.

"Come and help me," she ordered. The Chinaman came unwillingly. They found her saddle, but he only gazed at it in a stolid sort of fashion.

"No can fix," he said. "Missie no can ride. Better go back bed."

Lenora pushed him on one side. With a great effort she managed to reach her place in the saddle. Then she turned and, with her face to the depot, galloped away. The pain was excruciating. She could only keep

herself in the saddle with an effort. Yet all the time that one sentence was ringing in her head—"Tongues of flame!" She kept looking around anxiously. Suddenly the road dropped from a little decline. She was conscious of a wave of heat. In the distance she could see the smoke rolling across the open. She touched her horse with the quirt. The spot which she must pass to keep on the track to the depot was scarcely a hundred yards ahead, but already the fire seemed to be running like quicksilver across the ground, licking up the dry grasswood with indeed a flaming tongue. She glanced once behind, warned by the heat. The fire was closing in upon her. A puff of smoke suddenly enveloped her. She coughed. Her head began to swim and a fit of giddiness assailed her. She rocked in her saddle and the pony came to a sudden standstill, faced by the mass of rolling smoke and flame.

"Sanford!" Lenora cried. "Save me!"

The pony reared. She slipped from the saddle and fell across the track. (TO BE CONTINUED.)



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