The Black Box

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The BLACK BOX

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Author of "The Moving Finger," "The Prince of Sinners," " Anna, the Adventuress, " 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.

thoughts were framing themselves in

the brains of both of them. Then

dramatic interlude. Through the

there came a startling and in its way

empty house came the ringing of the

electric bell from the front door, shrill

and insistent. Without a moment's

hesitation, Quest hurried out and

Laura were there, the former carry-

"Don't be cross," she begged,

quickly. "We just had to come. Look!

We picked this up underneath the

"Say, this ought to be interesting,"

They passed into the library.

French lingered behind for a moment

and caught them up just as they were

opening the book underneath the elec-

claimed. "It was just by the side of

the wall there. Where's that maga-

ten by the anthropoid, rapidly devel-

After treatment with a new serum the

patient was relieved of the hydropho-

mild-mannered, humane man seems

teristics of the brutal anthropoid-

cunning, thievery, brutality. I do not

know what may come of this. I hesi-

(Signed) JAMES MERRILL, M. D.

Editor's Note-Just as we go

death of Doctor Merrill, the writer of

the above notes. He was attacked by

wild animals whilst alone in a South

American jungle, and torn to pieces.

There was a queer little silence

among the company. No one seemed

inclined for speech. They looked at

wrist forced the lock of the diary.

were almost in the nature of a dedica-

cost of my peace of mind, my happi-

ness, my reputation. This book, even

though it be too late to help me, shall

"French," he decided, "we must find

the professor. Will you have your

men search the house and grounds im-

The inspector left the room like a

Quest hesitated for a moment. Then

Ten years of horror, struggling all

the while to keep him from that other

his horrible secret from the world, to

cover up his crimes, even though

their shadow should rest upon me.

"Another page," Quest said. "Don't

He strode hastily to the door. French

"Well?" Quest asked, breathlessly.

"The professor is not in the house

French reported. "We are going to

Quest returned to the library.

Lenora clung to his arm. The diary

Quest opened the volume slowly.

The evil nature is growing stronge

every day. He is developing a sort

of ferocious cunning to help him ir

his crimes. He wanders about in the

ened room and one can see nothing

times if he closes his eyes, only the

"Mrs. Rheinholdt!" Quest muttered

The door was suddenly opened and

"You haven't found him?" Quest

"We've searched every room, every

cupboard, every scrap of the cellar

in the place," he announced. "We've

"Beaten!" he exclaimed, tersely.

French shook his head.

and one of the plain-clothes men were

Now Sanford Quest has come. Wi

he turned it over. All three read

dazed man. They could hear him giv-

"The next page," Lenora

clear my reputation.

ing orders outside.

"Just one page more!"

this mean discovery?

descanding the stairs.

search the grounds."

lay still upon the table.

Again they all read together:

have the truth here. Wait!

Quest closed the volume.

For ten years I have protected my

paper. I am doubtful as to

I ought to take.

"See here what I've found!" he ex-

ing a small, black-bound volume.

Quest took it in his hand,

he remarked. "Come along."

Diary of John Craig."

They all read together:

tric lamp.

zine?"

(Copyright, 1915, by Otis F. Wood.) SYNOPSIS.

Sanford Quest, master criminologist of the world, finds that in bringing to fustice Macdougal, the murderer of Lord Ashleigh's daughter, he has but just begun a life-and-death struggle with a mysterious master criminal. In a hidden hut in Professor Ashleigh's garden he has seen an ape skeleton and a living creature, half monkey, half man, destroyed by fire In his rooms have appeared black boxes containing notes, signed by a pair of armiess hands. Laura and Lenora, his assistants, suspect Craig, the professor's servant, of a double murder. The black Said. Quest and his party follow, and beyond into the desert. They are captured by Mongars, escape with Craig as their captive, and turn him over to Inspector | chair where Craig was sitting. It French in San Francisco. He escapes in must have slipped from his pocket. and goes back to New York, where he dies while Quest is attempting to hypno-

FIFTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XXXV.

The first shock was over. Craig's body had been removed, and the girls had taken Mary half stunned with grief, to their room. French and Quest were left alone.

"That is some disappointment, the former remarked, gloomily, is a disappointment." Quest

said, slowly, "which may clear the way to bigger things." "What's in your mind now?" French inquired.

Quest shook his head. "A turmoil, First of all, where is

the professor?" Must have scooted right away home," French suggested. "He was looking pretty sick all the time. Guess it must have been a powerful shock for him, and he fan't so young as he used to be."

"Give me that paper of Craig's again," Quest asked

The inspector produced the document from his inner pocket, and Quest, stretching it out upon his knee, read it word for word.

"Never to communicate or to have anything to do with anyone of the name of Ashleigh, ch?" he remarked. as he handed it back again. "Rather a queer provision, that, French." "I've been thinking that myself," the

inspector admitted. Quest glanced at the clock.

"Well," he said, "if you're ready, inspector, we'll be getting along." The two men drove to the outskirts of the city almost in silence. professor's house seemed more than They all watched him with fascinated ever deserted as they drew up at the eyes. It was something to escape front door. They entered without from their thoughts. They leaned ringing and crossed the hall towards over as he spread the book out bethe library. On the threshold Quest fore him. Those first two sentences

paused and held up his finger "Someone is in there," he whispered, I tion: stepping quickly forward. "Come!" He threw open the door. The room was empty, yet both Quest and French were conscious of a curious conviction that it had been occupied with-

in the last few seconds. "Queer, but it seemed to me I heard someone," French muttered.

was sure of it," Quest replied They stood still for a moment and listened. The silence in the empty house was almost unnatural. Quest turned away with a shrug of the

"At any rate," he said, "Craig's dying thoughts must have been truth-

He led the way to the fireplace. went down on his knees and passed his hands over the bricks. The third one he touched, shook. He tapped it-without a doubt it was hollow. With his penknife he loosened the mortar a little and drew it out easily. The back was open. Inside was the black box.

"Craig's secret at last!" French muttered, hoarsely. "Bring it to the light, quick!"

They were unemotional men, but the moment was supreme. The key to the mystery of these tragical weeks was there in their hands! Their eyes almost devoured tipose few hastily scrawled words buried with so much

Page 62, January Number, American Medical Journal, 1905. They looked at one another. They repeated vaguely this most commonplace of messages. As the final result of their strenuous enterprise, these cryptic words seemed pitifully inadequate. Quest's face darkened. crumpled the paper in his fingers.

"There must be some meaning in this," he muttered. "It can't be alto- dark, wearing a black velvet suit gether a fool's game we're on. Wait." with holes for his eyes, and leaving He moved towards a table which only his hands exposed, I have usually stood against the wall, but watched him come into a half-darkwhich had obviously been dragged out recently into the middle of the but the hands and the eyes; someroom. It was covered with bound volumes, Quest glanced at one and hands.

"American Medical Journal, 1905! French, there's something in this mes- French entered. He turned over the pages rapidly.

Then he came to a stop. Page 61 asked. was there; page 62 had been neatly removed with a pair of scissors. "The professor!" he cried. "The

afessor's been at work here!" The two men stood looking at one been into every corner of the ground another across the table. Strange searched it all backwards and for-

Quest pocketed the diary. "You're perfectly certain that he not in this house or anywhere upon the premises?"

"Certain sure!" French replied, Quest shrugged his shoulders. "Well, we'd better get back," he

They were on the point of starting, the chauffeur with his hand upon the starting handle, French with the steering wheel of the police car already in his hand. And then the little party seemed suddenly turned to stone. For a few breathless seconds. not one of them moved. Out into the clammy night air came the echoes of a hideous, inhuman, blood-curdling scream. Quest was the first to recover himself. He leaged from hisseat and rushed back across the empty hall into the study, followed a little way behind by French and the others. An unsuspected panel door French followed him. On the doorstep which led into the garden stood slightwas another surprise. Lenora and ly ajar. The professor, with his hand on the back of a chair, was staring at the fireplace, shaking as though with some horrible ague, his face distorted, his body curiously hunched up. He seemed suddenly to have dropped his humanity, to have fallen You see what is written on it?- creatures. He heard their footsteps, but he did not turn his head. His hands were stretched out in front of him as though to keep away from his sight some hateful object.

"Stop him!" he cried. "Take him away! It's Craig-his spirit! came to me in the garage, he followed me through the grounds, he mocked at me when I hid in the tree. He's there now, kneeling before the fireplace. Why can't I kill him! is coming! Stop him, someone!" No one spoke or moved; no one, in-

He spread out the piece of paper-it deed, had the power. Then at last fitted exactly into the empty space. Quest found words. There is no one in the room, pro

Professor Ashleigh, after being bit- fessor," he said, "except us." The sound of a human voice seeme oped hydrophobia of a serious nature. to produce a strange effect. The professor straightened himself, shook his head, his hands dropped to his side bic symptoms, but to my horror this ghastly pale, but his smile was once more the smile of the amiable natupossessed at times of all the charac- ralist.

"My friends," he said, "forgive me am very old, and the events of these last few hours have unnerved me Forgive me."

tate to put even these words on to He groped for a moment and sand course, in the interests of humanity. into a chair. Quest fetched a decanter and a glass from the sideboard poured out some wine and held it to his lips. The professor drank it eagpress, a cable announces the terrible

dear friend." he exclaimed "you have saved me. I have some thing to tell you, something I must tell you at once, but not here. I loathe this place. Let me come with you to your rooms."

"As you please," Quest answered

one another in dumb, wondering hor-He gripped Quest's arm. In silence ror. Then Quest drew a penknife they passed from the room, in silence from his pocket and with a turn of his they took their places once more in the automobiles, in silence they drove without a pause to Quest's rooms. The professor made his way at once to his favorite easy chair, threw off his overcoat and leaned back.

"Quest," he pronounced, "you ar the best friend I have in my life! is you who have rid me of my great burden. Tell me-help me a little with my story-have you read that page from the Medical Journal which



The Professor Sat There Like a Fig ure of Stone Craig has kept locked up all thes

"It was forged," the professor clared, firmly, "forged by Craig. the years since he has blackmailed me. I have been his servant and his tool. I have been afraid to speak. At last I am free of him. Thank God!"

"Craig, after all," French muttered Lenora stood a little apart with a faint frown upon her forehead She touched Quest on the shoulder. "Mr. Quest," she murmured, "he is

Quest turned his head. His lin

"He is lying!" Lenora in tell you there's another creature e, something we don't up his mind. If I am wrong, I will go down on my knees and beg for fo

Quest nodded. Lenora hastened to the farther end of the room, snatched the cloth from the instrument and wheeled down the little mirror with



"He is Dead!" Quest Declared.

watched her. Slowly his face changed. The benevolence faded away, his teeth for a moment showed in something which was almost a snarl.

"You believe me?" be cried, turning to Quest, "You are not going to try that horrible thing on me-Proup, I am not fit for it. Look at my hands, how they shake.'

"Professor," Questicaid, sternly, "we are surrounded by the shadow of some terrible deeds for which as yet there is no explanation. I do not say that we mistrust you, but I ask you to submit to this test." "I refuse!" the professor replied,

harshly. "And I insist," Quest muttered. The professor drew a little breath. ie sat back in his chair. His face the machine and with deft fingers adjusted the fittings on one side. Quest himself connected it up on the other. was clearly audible. The very atmosphere seemed charged with the thrill and wonder of it. Never before had Quest met with resistance so complete and immovable. Sternly he concentrated the whole of his will power was a change. The professor fell back in the chair. The tense self-control had passed from his features, his lips twitched. Simultaneously, the mirror for a moment was clouded -then slowly a picture upon it gathered outline and substance.' There was a jungle, strange, tall trees, and brushwood so thick that it reached to the waists of the two men who were slowly making their way through | him. He rose to his feet. There was it. One was the professor, clearly met; the other a stranger to all of himself with the calm dignity of the them, Suddenly they stopped. The latter had crept a yard or so ahead, his gun raised to his shoulder, his eyes fixed upon some possible object of pursuit. There was a sudden change in the professor. They saw him seize his gun by the barrel and whirl it above his head. He seemed suddenly to lose his whole identity. He crouched on his haunches, almost like an animal, and sprang at the other's throat. They could almost hear the snarl from his lips as the two men went down together into the undergrowth. The picture faded away.

"Doctor, Merrill!" Lenora faltered. Then it was not wild beasts which Almost immediately figures again small passage which seemed to lead from the back entrance of a house; the professor, with a black mantle, Craig followed him, pleading, expostulating. They saw the conservatory for a minute, and then blackness. The professor was leaning against a marble basin. There was nothing to be seen of him but his eyes and hands. They saw him listen for a moment or two in cold, unresponsive silence then stretch out his hand and push Craig away. The picture glowed and faded and glowed again. Then they saw through the gloom the figure a woman approach, a diamond nec lace around her neck. They saw the hands steal out and encircle throat-and then more darkness, siobscurity. The mirror wa

empty once more. "Mrs. Rheinholdt's jewels!" Lenora cried. "What next? Oh! my God.

Their eyes ached with the strain, but there was not one of them who could even glance away from the mirror. It was Quest's study which slowly appeared then. The Salvation him. Then suddenly he sprang to his Army girl was there, talking to the feet. Again the change came into professor. They saw him leave her, his face which they had seen in the they saw him look back from the mirror. French dashed forward to Miss Laura will join us at Delmon-door, a strange, evil glance. Then the wards him. The professor snarled, ico's for luncheon at one o'clock." secretary entered and spoke to her. seemed about to spring, then suddenly Once more the door opened. The once more stretched out his hands to hands were there, stretching and show that he was helpless and handed reaching, a paper-weight gripped in to Quest the paper upon which he had the right-hand fingers. They saw it been writing. raised above the secretary's head, they "You have nothing to fear from me," saw the other hand take the girl by he exclaimed. "Here is my last menthe throat and push her towards the | sage to you, Sanford Quest. Rend it-

its coils and levers." The professor moment. The picture faded out. "Oh, stop it!" Lenora begged "Haven't we seen enough? We know

the truth now. Stop it or I shall die! The criminologist made no reply His eyes were still fixed upon the pro fessor, who showed some signs of re turning consciousness. He was gripfessor Lord Ashleigh? I am all broken | ping at his collar. He seemed to have difficulty with his breathing. Quest suddenly braced himself. He pushed Lenora back.

"One more," he muttered. "There's something growing in his mind. I can

Again they all turned towards the mirror. They saw the hallway of Ash leigh house, the pictures upon the walls, they could almost feel the quiet silence of night. They saw the professor come stealing down the stairs He was wearing the black velvet sui became still, his lips were drawn with the cowl in his hand. They closely together. Lenora wheeled up watched him pause before a certain door, draw on the cowl and disappear Through the opening they could see Lord Askleigh asleep in bed, the moon-The professor sat there like a figure light streaming through the open winof stone. The silence in the room | dow across the counterpane. They was so intense that the ticking of | saw the professor turn with a strange, the small clock upon the mantel piece | horrible look in his face and close the door. Lenora burst into sobs. "No more!" she shrieked. more, or I shall go mad!"

Quest leaned forward and released their victim. The whole atmosphere of the place seemed immediately to upon his task. Almost at once there | change. Lenora drew a long, convulsive breath and sank into a chair. The professor sat up and gazed at them all with the air of a man who has just awakened from a dream. "Have I, by any chance, slept?" he

asked. "Or-" He never finished his sentence. His eyes fell upon the mirror, the metal band lying by his side. He read the truth in the faces still turned towards another and equally sudden change in "The end of our struggle, I pre-

sume?" he said to Quest, pointing to the metal band. "You will at least admit that I have shown you fine sport." No one answered him. Even Quest had barely yet recovered himself. The professor shrugged his shoulders. "I recognize, of course," he said.

gravely, "that this is the end. A person in extremis has privileges. Will you allow me to write just a matter of twenty lines at your desk?" Silently Quest assented. The profes-

sor seated himself in the swing chair, drew a sheet of paper towards him, dipped the pen in the ink and began to write. Then he turned around and reached for his own small black bag appeared in the mirror. There was a which lay upon the table. Quest caught him by the wrist.

"What do you want out of that, professor?" he inquired "Merely my own pen and ink," the

professor expostulated. "If there is anything I detest in the world, it is violet ink. And your pen, too, is execrable. As they are to be the last words I shall leave to a sorrowing world. I should like to write them in my own fashion. Open the bag for yourself, if you will. You can hass me the things out."

Quest opened the bag, took out a pen and a small glass bottle of ink. He handed them to the professor, who started at once more to write. Ou turned away to French. The professor looked over his shoulder and suddenly bared his wrist. Lendra seized her employer by the arm. "Look!" she cried. "What is he

Quest swung around, but he was too late. The professor had dug the pen laughed as they all hurried towards

table. A wild scream broke from read it aloud. Always remember that nora's lips. Quest wavered for a this was not your triumph, but mine."

Quest held up the paper. They all read. The professor's letters were carefully formed, his handwriting perfectly legible:

You have been a clever opponent, Sanford Quest, but even now you are to be cheated. The wisdom of the ages outreaches yours, outreaches it and trlumphs. Quest looked up quickly,

"What the devil does he mean?"

The professor's arms shot suddenly above his head. Again that strange animal look convulsed his features He burst into a loud unnatural laugh.

"Mean, you tool?" he cried, holding out his wrist, which was slowly turning black, "Poisoned! That is what it means!".

They all stared at him. Quest seized the ink bottle, revealed the false top and laid it down again with a little exclamation. Then, before they could realize it the end came The professor lay, a crumpled-up heap, upon the floor.

Quest swung round in his chair as French entered the room and held out

"Glad to see you, French. Help yourself to a cigar." "I don't know as I want to smoke this morning just at present, thank you." French replied. "Nothing wrong, ch?"

. "The fact of it is," French explained. 'I should like a few words with Miss Laura."

Quest laughed shortly. "Why on earth couldn't you say so?" he observed. "Never knew you bashful before, inspector. She's up in the laboratory. I'll ring for someone to show you the way."

Quest touched the bell and his new secretary entered almost at once. "Take Inspector French up into the aboratory." Quest directed. See you later, French."

"Yes-perhaps-I hope so," the inspector replied nervously. Quest watched him disappear with a puzzled smile. Then he sat down at his desk, drew a sheet of paper towards him and began to write:

My Dear Inspector: I am taking this opportunity of letting you know that out of deference to the wishes of the woman I hope soon to marry, I am abandoning the hazardous and nerve-racking profession of criminology for a safer and happier career. You will have, therefore, to find help elsewhere in the future. With best wishes. Yours.

SANFORD QUEST. He left the sheet of paper upon the desk and, ringing the bell, sent for Lenora. She appeared in a few moments and came over to his side "What is it, Mr. Quest?" she asked He gave her the letter without re

mark. She read it through and, turning slowly around, looked at him ex- Falcon. pectantly. "How's that seem to you?"

asked, reaching out his hand for a "Very sensible, indeed," she replied

"It's no sort of life, this, for a married man," Quest declared. "You



to Produce a Strange Effect.

agree with me there, don't you, Len

"Yes!" she admitted, a little faintly, The secretary entered the room, helped Quest on with his coat and handed him his hat. "If you are quite ready, Lenora."

"Ready!" she exclaimed. "Where are we going?"

"Fancy having to explain all these things!" he said, taking her arm. "I just want you to understand, Lenora, that I've waited-quite long enough Parkins," he added, turning to his secretary, "if anyone calls, just say his arm. He sat in his chair and that my wife and I will be back early in the afternoon. And you'd better

"Very good, sir," the man replied. Lenora's face was suddenly transformed. She passed her arm through Quest's. He stooped and kissed her as he led her towards the door.

"You understand now, don't you?" he whispered, smiling down at her. "I think so," she admitted, with

THE END.

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