INITIALS ONLY

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"THE FILLMORE BALL," "THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE," ETC.
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SYNOPSIS.

George Anderson and wife are a respectable middle class man whose office is Chestnut Street, Manhattan. Their apartment building stands in the same street and goes by the name of The Elsinore. Among the tenants is Miss Challoner, whom Anderson has fallen fond. Asked on her departure the day, he saw wash his hands of her, he refuses. Miss Challoner declares that Mr. Orlando Brotherton, a Pinge-alone find that Miss Challoner was the heiress to a large fortune, and that her guardian, Mr. Hopkinson, drove an aged detective, and Sweetwater, his assistant, to the Elsinore to investigate. Miss Challoner's beautiful mother died rather found near the scene of tragedy in the basement. Anderson and Mr. Hopkinson meet with Sweetwater to discuss his daughter's case. Sweetwater found in the basement a pair of gloves which showed that the murderer was disguised. This letter was signed "Initials Only." Anderson and Hopkinson agree with Sweetwater to employ Brotherton, who is to address a meeting of the tenants of the Elsinore. Brotherton pulls a small firecracker causing a panic and being identified. Brotherton is found to be a detective employed by Hopkinson to watch Sweetwater. Brotherton tells the outcome of his acquaintance with Miss Challoner.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

"I do, if you make a great impression on me," I shall hope for our further acquaintance," she said. "We have one very strong interest in common. And if ever a human face spoke eloquently, it was at that moment. I thought it sprang from personal interest, and I gave me courage to put sue the intention which had taken the place of every other feeling and ambition by which I had hitherto been moved. If the cold ignore the serial gulf between us, I felt free to take the leap. Opportunities had never been a fault of mine. I realized that I must first let her see the manner of man I was and what life meant to me and must mean to her if the union I contemplated should become an actual fact. I wrote letter to her, but I did not give her my address or ask for request a meeting. I was not ready for any word from her. I am not ready for either and I could wait. And I did, for weeks and weeks, suddenly appeared at her hotel."

"What was that?" put in Dr. Heath, anxious to bridge the pause which must have been heavy, painful to the listening father.

"The week after Thanksgiving I did not see her the first day, and only casually the second. But she knew I was in the building, and when I came upon her one evening at the very desk in the mezzanine which we all have worn better cause to remember, I could not forbear expressing myself in a way she could not misunderstand. The result was of a kind to drive a man like myself to an extremity of self-consideration and rage. She rose up as if insulted, and flung me one sentence and one sentence only before she hailed the elevator and left my presence. A cry could not have been more dismissed with less ceremony."

"What is the sentence you allude to? Let me hear the very words." Mr. Challoner had come forward and now stood awaiting his reply in a dignified but pathetic figure, which all must view with respect.

"I hate the memory of them, but since you demand it, I will repeat them just as they fell from her lips. It was Mr. Brotherton's letter retort. "She said, 'You of all men should not inquire the meaning of my proposals. Had your letters given me the airy hint of the feelings you have just expressed, you would never have had the opportunity of approaching me.' That was all, but bitter enough. It was scathing. Ladies who have supped sufficiently of either, show a fine scorn for the common wares of the entertainer.

The assertive boldness—some would call it brazen effrontery—with which she finished the story of his relations with the dead heiress, seemed to be more than Mr. Challoner could stand. With a look of extreme pain and perplexity he vanished from the doorway, and it fell to Dr. Heath to interpose.

"Is this letter—a letter of trust you will remember—the only communication which passed between you and Miss Challoner after this unfortunate passage of arms at the Chesmont?"

"Yes. I had no wish to address her again. I had exhausted in this one outburst whatever humiliation I felt."

And she? Did she give no sign, make you no answer?"

"None whatever." Then, as if he found it impossible to hide this hurt to his pride, "she did not even seem to consider me worthy the honor of an added remark. Such arrogance is no doubt commonplace in a Challoner."

This time his bitterness did not pass unchecked by the coroner. "I remember the grim hairy of the only Challoner who can boast you, and I expect he is right."

Mr Brotherton bowed.

"I have finished," said he. "I shall have nothing more to say on the subject. And he drew himself up in expectation of the dismissal he evident ly thought pending.

But the latter was not done with him by any means. He had a theory in regard to the unidentifiable murder which he hoped to establish by this interview, and, in pursuit of this plan, he had only mentioned to Mr. Brotherton a part of his reasons. He was gin at once to touch a fresh line of examination by saying

"You will pardon me. If I press this matter. I have been given to understand that notwithstanding your break with Miss Challoner, you have kept up your visits to the Chesmont and were even on the spot at the time of her death."

"On the spot?"

"In the hotel, I mean."

"There you are right, I was in the hotel."

"At the time of her death?"

"Very near the time. I remember hearing some disturbance in the lobby below me, just as I was passing out at the broadway entrance."

"You did, and did not return?"

"Why should I return? I am not a man of much curiosity. There was no reason why I should connect a sudden alarm in the lobby of the Chesmont with any cause of special interest to myself."

This was no true and the look which accompanied the words was so frank that the coroner hesitated a moment before he said:

"Certainly not, unless—well, to be direct, unless you had just seen Miss Challoner and knew her state of mind and what was likely to follow your abrupt departure."

"I had no interview with Miss Challoner."

"But you saw her? Saw her that evening and just before the accident?"

Sweetwater's papers rattled. It was the only sound to be heard in that moment of silence. Then—

"What do you mean by those words?" inquired Mr. Brotherton in a startled composure. "I have said that I had no interview with Miss Challoner. Why do you ask me then, if I saw her?"

"Because I believe that you did see her from a distance possibly, but yet directly and with no possibility of mistake."

"Do you put that as a question?"

"Did you see her figure as you face that night?"

"No."

Nothing—not even the rattling of Sweetwater's papers—disturbed the silence which followed this monosyllabic reply from witness? Doctor Heath asked at last.

"From a point far enough away to make any identification between you impossible. I do not think you will require me to recall the exact spot."

"If I were one which made it possible for her to see you as clearly as you could see her, I think it would be very much to your advantage to tell us."

"I will locate it myself. I had hoped not to be called upon to mention what I cannot but consider a most unfortunate coincidence. I met Miss Challoner's eyes at the instant I stood on the top of the little staircase running up to the mezzanine. I had thinked then far to an impulse I had frequently indulged in before, to step near enough to retrieve the hard effect which must have been made upon her by my angry note. I knew that she was somewhere between me and the mezzanine at this hour, and set as far as the top of the staircase in my effort to join her. But I got no further. Where I was I saw her face, with her face turned my way, I remembered the scorn with which she had received my former heartfelt proposals and the bitter words with which she had turned away from her and fled down the steps and on out of the building by the main entrance. She saw me and fled. I had thrown down a man she had taken no pains to understand or suppose sufficiently of either, show a fine scorn for the common wares of the entertainer.

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