

Out of the Darkness

By CHARLES J. DUTTON

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"I'M HALF CRAZY"

John Bartley, noted criminal investigator, recently returned from Secret Service work during the war, is asked by the governor of New York to investigate a mysterious attempted robbery of the Robert Slyke home at Circle Lake, near Saratoga, and to establish the guilt or innocence of two men in the penitentiary for the crime. A miscarriage of justice is suspected. Bartley finds in it the restating of an old case, is interested and agrees to solve the mystery. With his friend Pelt, a newspaper man, Bartley goes to Circle Lake, the pair becoming the guests of Bob Currie, an old friend. The three visit the Slyke home. Slyke resents Bartley's coming, saying he is satisfied the two men in prison are guilty. Bartley is not. Next morning Slyke is found dead in bed, apparently having shot himself. Miss Potter, the village police chief, Roche, and the family physician, Doctor King, all agree Slyke killed himself, but Bartley insists he was murdered. Investigation, Bartley finds evidence that Slyke, after a card party he had given, was shot on the tower of the house, undressed, and placed in bed.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

As if answering my thoughts, he said, "Yes, Slyke was murdered here." Though I had been sure he would say that, it did not seem reasonable that any person should select the balcony of a tower, fifty or more feet in the air, as a place in which to commit a murder. It became still more puzzling when I remembered that Slyke had been carried down two flights of stairs, undressed, placed in bed and a revolver clasped in his hand. Roche, his fat face puzzled, gave me a bewildered glance. I could sympathize with his astonishment as I felt much the same way myself.

I expressed my surprise to Bartley and he responded, "I know, Pelt, all that you have said and all that you are thinking. It does seem out of all reason that anyone should pick the top of this tower for a murder. Yet here are the spots of blood, and there are none anywhere else. I am sure he was not killed downstairs; it must have been here, and—"

He paused and, bending over, picked something up. At first I could not make out what it was; then I saw that it was a gold-plated collar-button such as a man wears in the front of his shirt. Roche needed only one look to identify it, "Slyke's!"

Bartley did not speak until he had walked entirely around the tower and was again beside us. "Chief," he said, "we may say there is no doubt that Slyke was killed up here. I do not know why such a strange place was chosen, but I do know that he was dragged down these stairs after his death and placed in his bed to make his death appear to be suicide. The odds were very much in favor of the criminal's being able to succeed in his design, too. But he slipped up—slipped up in the manner in which he put the gun in the hand and in the way in which he closed the eyes. But why he should have killed Slyke up here I cannot understand."

He paused for a moment, as if thinking, then continued, "Slyke gave a party last evening. The crime must have been committed after the party broke up. That was probably between one and two o'clock in the morning. One man, perhaps two, stayed behind to talk with Slyke. We can't say positively that they did, but they may have. Roche thinks that this man, or men, committed the murder. One man may have stayed and then gone away before the murder, or someone else may have come later. They may have come up here to see the view, and one of them shot him. After the crime the body, at any rate, was taken downstairs again and undressed, the nightshirt placed on it, and it laid in bed. As he wanted it to appear like suicide, the murderer placed the gun in the dead man's fingers, but he either did not remember, or perhaps did not know, how the eyes should look after a sudden death. The very things done to make us think it was suicide prove that it could not have possibly been one."

As Bartley was now ready to go downstairs again, we all returned to the room below. The first thing we saw when we entered, was a brown stocking, the mate to the one in the room below. We had not noticed it on our way to the balcony as it lay half under the rug, and the opened door hid it. Bartley picked it up, glanced at it, smiled, and was going to say something when a voice called to us from below.

In a second we were down the stairs and in Slyke's bedroom. The door to the stairway was closed just as we had left it; Bartley opened it to find a young man with a big camera under his arm on the landing. He gave us an inquiring glance; then seeing Roche, whom he seemed to know, he announced, "Doctor King said you wanted me up here to take some pictures. What shall I take first?"

Bartley glanced at the bed and I thought gave a slight start. The bedclothes that had been drawn down around Slyke's waist when we were examining the revolver in his hand, had been replaced by Bartley, before we went to the floor above, in the position in which they were when we entered the room—that is, around

Slyke's neck and half covering his chin. "You had better take first a picture of the bed as it is now," Bartley suggested. "Then I will pull the bedclothes down and you can take a picture of his hand with the revolver in it."

The first picture took some time, for the young man could not seem to find the proper place for his camera, but at last it was done.

"Now for the other one," Bartley went to the side of the bed, reached down, and pulled back the bedclothes. As he drew them down he paused and a cry escaped him.

"Look!"

As my eyes fell on the hand of the dead man I, too, started. When we had gone upstairs the revolver was clasped in Slyke's still fingers. Now they were empty. Someone had removed the gun!

CHAPTER IV

The Dead Man's Eyes.

For several moments we were all so startled that none of us spoke. For myself, I could only look at the hand that had, so short a time before, held the revolver. I could not imagine who could have taken it, and what his purpose in doing so could be. I glanced at Bartley. His face was set, a white line showing around his tightly closed lips. He was angry, very angry.

As he turned to Roche, who stood with eyes bulging, his voice shook a little. "Roche, go and get Miss Potter at once. Tell her to call all the servants and have them assemble in the living room. I will be down in a moment."

Roche hurried out without speaking. Immediately Bartley bent again over the bed, studying the position of the hand that had held the revolver. When he straightened up he told the photographer that he would not need him any longer. As soon as the young man had left the room, Bartley turned to me with a rueful little smile.

"Well, Pelt, I certainly slipped up this morning. We left this room without locking the door. True, there was no key, but I should have left either Roche or you on guard. Instead of that we have given someone a chance to slip in here and remove the revolver. He thought he was removing a valuable piece of evidence. The joke is that the removal of the revolver does not make much difference. We all saw the gun, and we all heard Miss Potter say that it had belonged to Slyke."

"But," I asked, "who could have known about it—I mean that it was



She shrieked, "You say I know who killed him—I know!"

murder? You were the only one who suggested it. Every one else who knew about the crime thought it was suicide."

"That's the queer thing about it, Pelt. Only those that were in the room with us are presumed to know it is murder. That is, unless Miss Potter told others when she left here. The strange thing is that it was first made to appear to be suicide by placing the gun in Slyke's hand. Now that evidence is removed I hardly know what we are expected to believe. I had an idea, even before we came into this room, that Miss Potter knew that her brother-in-law had been murdered."

What more he might have said I do not know, for at that moment Roche returned. He looked sheepish and rather ill at ease. He told us that Miss Potter had refused to call the servants, saying that Bartley had no authority to compel her to do so, and—he paused a moment, his red face flushing a deeper red—she had added that she considered Roche was the only one who had any authority to give orders here. For herself, she was convinced that Slyke had committed suicide, and that Bartley did not know what he was talking about when he said that he had been murdered.

Bartley gave a low whistle. "Does that satisfy you, Roche?" he asked. "No, it doesn't," Roche replied, shaking his head vigorously. "It doesn't, not by one little bit. I am frank enough to say, Mr. Bartley, that though I don't see any light in this all, I know you can. Your experience and reputation are both greater than

mine. I am, of course, the head of the local police and shall have to put up some kind of a bluff, but I wish you would take charge of the case."

"You say Miss Potter doesn't wish to give us any aid at all?" Roche nodded. "Well, then, Roche, we will have to go down and see what we can do with her together. You tell her I am your assistant. You might also add that if she refuses to give us the information we need, we can arrest her on the charge of obstructing an officer in the discharge of his duty."

Both men grinned at this, and, still smiling, Roche led the way from the room. From the top of the stairs we could see Miss Potter in the living room below, pacing nervously back and forth. When she heard us descending, with Roche in the lead, she stopped at the desk and began to arrange its contents in an effort to cover her nervousness and confusion. She did not look up even when we were at her side.

After waiting for her to speak, Bartley said in a grave tone, "Miss Potter, I understand that you told Officer Roche that you refused to call the servants."

She raised her face, crimson with anger, and tried to answer, but though her lips formed the words not a sound came from them. At last, in a voice broken with passion and with words stumbling one over the other, she said, "I—yes—it's so. I—told Mr. Roche not to call the servants. No one asked you to come here. You have no business in this house—looking into things that do not concern you. Mr. Slyke is dead, and every one will believe that he killed himself in spite of anything you can say. Anything that has to be done Mr. Roche can do. It's none of your business, anyway."

Standing in front of us with her figure straight and her shoulders thrown back defiantly, she almost shrieked the last words at us. She was so angry that she did not seem to know what she was saying. I wondered why she should be in such a rage. So far as I could see, there was no reason for it. We stood silent and embarrassed. Bartley's eyes never left her face. Under his grave scrutiny she flushed and her eyes dropped.

"Miss Potter," he said suddenly, "you don't want me to believe that you know who killed your brother-in-law, do you?"

His question seemed the last straw. She turned on him like a fury, and her eyes roved over the desk as if she were looking for something to throw at him. She shrieked, "You say I know who killed him—I know? Why, I don't even believe that he was murdered. How dare you say that—how can you stand there and say it to my face?"

Bartley shrugged his shoulders. "I don't say that you know, but if you keep on acting like this whenever you are asked a question some one else will. If it should come out at the inquest, for instance, that you refused to allow us to question the servants, people may not only think you know, but they may go even further. If you don't aid us, Roche can arrest you for obstructing an officer in the performance of his duty."

This was news to her. Anger gave place to fear, and she looked at us helplessly. Bartley realized that, overcome by what she had been through, she was not herself, and added kindly, "I know this death must have shocked you terribly, Miss Potter. I am trying my best to make it easier for you. I did not force myself into the house. Doctor King himself asked me to come this morning. What you do not seem to comprehend is that a serious crime has been committed. Your brother-in-law has been murdered, and the law will demand to know who did it. It will also want to know if you did everything in your power to help us to discover the murderer."

For a moment she said nothing, then she turned and faced Bartley, her eyes searching his, and in the tone of one weary and broken she said, "I will do what I can to help you."

She hesitated and brushed the unkempt hair again and again from her eyes, as if hardly knowing what she was doing.

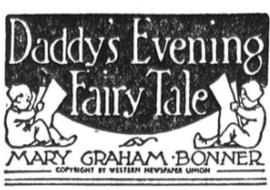
"It's driving me wild. I am half crazy," she cried suddenly, and taking an uncertain step forward stumbled almost to her knees. Bartley placed his arm around her and led her to a chair. Then turning to Roche, he asked him to call the servants.

As soon as Roche had gone, Bartley began to examine the room. A few feet away from him were three card tables, their surfaces littered with playing cards, just as they had been thrown down when the last game was over; so, too, the chairs were in the same position into which they had been pushed when the players rose for the last time. Bartley picked up the cards on the nearest table and counted them. He did the same thing with those on the second table and on the third. At the last table he paused longer than he had at the other two. Finally he took from his pocket the two cards we had found in the tower and motioned to me to join him.

As I reached Bartley's side, he asked me to count the cards on the table. I did so and found the pack was two cards short. As I finished, he handed me the two cards that we had found upstairs saying, "Look at these."

Suddenly a girlish voice called, "Who is talking about me?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



SAMMY SAUSAGE'S PRIZE

"Grunt, grunt," said Sammy Sausage. "I won a prize."

"Squeal, squeal," said Miss Ham, "tell us about it. Let us see the prize."

"Let us see the prize; grunt, grunt," said Grandfather Porky Pig.

"Yes, we take such an interest in you, grunt, grunt," said Sir Percival Pork.

"We do that," said Sir Benjamin Bacon. "Let us see your prize. We want to admire it, for we are sure it is a delicious prize."

"Delicious?" questioned Sammy Sausage.

"Well, surely it is something to eat," said Sir Benjamin Bacon.

"Surely it must be," said Sir Percival Pork.

"That is what I thought it was," said Grandfather Porky Pig.

"I thought the same," said Miss Ham.

"And so did I," said Mrs. Pink Pig.

"I did, too, grunt, grunt," said Pinky Pig.

"Well, I never said it wasn't food and I never said it wasn't delicious," said Sammy Sausage as he twisted his little tail and looked out of the corner of his right eye in a very amused way.

"Dear me, dear me," said Grandfather Porky, "whatever do you mean, Sammy Sausage? You don't explain yourself at all."

"First you tell us you won a prize. Then we all take a nice pig interest in what you have done and in your success and we ask you to show us the prize."

"Then when we say that without doubt it must be a delicious prize you seem surprised and you say 'delicious' in a very surprised manner."

"Then when we say that surely we thought it was something to eat you



"We Take Such an Interest in You."

"say that you never said it wasn't delicious and that you never said it wasn't something to eat."

"True enough. But the puzzling part is that you've really told us nothing at all."

"And here we are, so ready to be interested, dear Sammy Sausage, my beloved grandson, and the pride of his grandfather's porky eye."

"I've always thought you would do well, Sammy, I was always one to say you had it in you."

"I have heard," said Sammy, with a naughty twinkle in his eye, "that when creatures were successful ever and ever so many people were apt to come around and tell them what friends they had always been and how they had always known it was in these successful ones to be successful."

"They never were around, though, when the creatures were working for success because they weren't at all sure whether they would be successful and they weren't going to encourage in the hard times."

"No, they were going to be around when the good times came. Then they were going to say that they had encouraged these successful ones to this success!"

"And it seems as though now that you think I've been successful you were going to tell me how you always knew I had it in me and yet I never remember your saying this before."

"Never mind," said Porky Pig. "What you remember, I know what I always thought and I know I always thought you had it in you."

"Ha, ha," squealed Sammy Sausage. "Show us the prize and don't talk so much," the others squealed.

"My prize," said Sammy, "was food, and it was delicious and it is all gone now."

"I wouldn't show you my prize. I could not show you my prize now. But I wouldn't have done so before because I know that it would only be quarreled about."

"I didn't want to start a lot of fussing."

"You would all have thought in some way you had helped me to get it and so that you deserved your reward."

"But no, I knew you didn't and so I didn't bother to talk about it with you before. Now it is safely put away in my own good tummy and I tell you that I won a prize now that it is all right to tell you."

"I won it because I found a lot of pig weed where no one thought there was any. That was my prize for my smart discovery. I gave myself the prize and I thanked myself for giving myself so fine a prize for this discovery."

But the pigs had all wandered off—Sammy's prize no longer interested them!



BOY SCOUT SETS EXAMPLE

A busy man of large affairs, witness of the following incident, was so impressed with its significance that he personally has written this account: "On one of the large green busses of the Washington Rapid Transit company last week, coming down Sixteenth street on its way to Pennsylvania avenue, every available seat was taken and no one was standing. At the next stop a lady boarded the bus. A small boy seated near the window just beyond a lady who occupied the end seat, promptly arose and offered his seat to the new passenger, who protested saying:

"Oh, do not give up your seat for me, little lad. You are a little lad and I am a woman. Keep your seat."

"No," said the lad. "I can't do that. Already he had left his seat and the lady proceeded to take it."

"She said, 'I am interested to know why you gave the seat up to me.'"

"Well, said the lad, 'there are two reasons. In the first place, you are a lady, and I am a boy. In the second place I promised to do it.'"

"You promised to do it?" said the lady in astonishment. "Whom did you promise and why?"

"Well," explained the boy, "you see I am a boy scout, and I promised my scoutmaster to give my seat to a lady or small child on board street cars and busses when there was no other seat to be had."

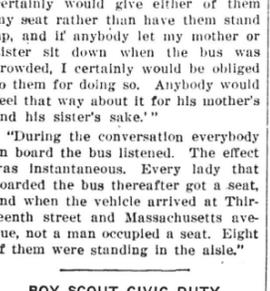
"Well, that's fine; but how long do you expect to keep your promise?" asked the lady.

"Oh, I expect to keep it all my life. That is how long I promised to keep it," replied the lad.

"Oh, yes, you see," said the boy, "if you were my mother or my sister, I certainly would give either of them my seat rather than have them stand up, and if anybody let my mother or sister sit down when the bus was crowded, I certainly would be obliged to them for doing so. Anybody would feel that way about it for his mother's and his sister's sake."

"During the conversation everybody on board the bus listened. The effect was instantaneous. Every lad that boarded the bus thereafter got a seat, and when the vehicle arrived at Thirtieth street and Massachusetts avenue, not a man occupied a seat. Eight of them were standing in the aisle."

BOY SCOUT CIVIC DUTY



Boy Scouts of Jacksonville, Fla., rendered practical aid when they assisted in the "Walk Rite" campaign.

FROM SCOUT COURT OF HONOR

Credit is due the Court of Honor records of Rochester, N. Y., for the following excerpt:

Scout Harry Tompkins of the Roosevelt Troop, passed 15 merit badges last spring during a troop advancement drive.

The chairman of the Court of Honor, thinking that the boy had slipped through most of his requirements without any real work, proceeded to cross-examine him as follows:

"What did you do for your electricity merit badge?"

"I wired my father's house," replied Tompkins.

"How did you earn your automobile merit badge?"

"I designed and built an automobile."

"How fast will it go?"

"Forty-five to fifty miles an hour."

"What did you paint for your painting merit badge?"

"I painted my father's house last spring."

"You win," said the chairman. "Next."

ONE GREAT GOOD TURN

Scout Rudolph Steinfeld of Troop 5, Holoken, N. J., because of preparedness gained through scout training, was able to save his mother from burning to death. When the boy came home one afternoon he first noticed his mother bending over the gas stove and a moment later saw her garments on fire. The boy quickly removed his coat and wrapped it around his mother's flaming dress. The blaze extinguished, he had treated his mother's burns.



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The Woman.

"John," she said sabbily, "am I the only girl you ever loved?"

Silence.

"John, tell me, dear, am I the only girl you ever kissed?"

He raised his head and spoke: "I shall tell you the truth, Mary." With a scream of anguish she clapped her hand over her mouth.

"Never that, John, never that! A woman only wants to be happy! Lie to me, sweetheart; lie to me and let me believe it."



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