

The Black Box

THE GREAT MYSTERY STORY PRODUCED BY THE UNIVERSAL FILM MANUFACTURING CO.

BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

QUEST continued. "Even Harris there looks like he was concerned with life." "You are not suggesting that that is possible, I suppose?" "I should not have believed it possible. The young lady of our party, however, who declares that she saw Craig board the steamer is quite immovable." "The captain rose to his feet. He was a man of medium height, strongly built, with short, brown beard and keen blue eyes." (To Be Continued)

CHAPTER XVII.

WE are all liable to make mistakes," Quest observed, "and I am inclined to believe that this is one of yours." "Laura's expression was a little dogged." "If you're not clever for you and Mr. Harris," she said, "I can't help that. I only know that he came on board. My eyes are the one thing in life I do believe in." "If you'll excuse me saying so, Miss Laura," Harris ventured, leaning deferentially toward her, "there isn't a passenger on board this ship, or a servant, or one of the crew, whom we haven't seen. We've been into every stateroom, and we've even searched the hold. We've been over the ship, backward and forward. The captain's own steward has been our guide, and we've conducted an extra search on our own account. Personally I must say I have come to the same conclusion as Mr. Quest. At the present moment there is no such person as the man we are looking for on board this steamer." "Then he either changed to another one," Laura declared obstinately, "or else he jumped overboard."

Harris, who was a very polite man, gazed thoughtfully outward. Quest smiled.

"When Laura's set on a thing," he remarked, "she takes a little moving. What do you think about it, professor?" "The professor laid down his book, keeping his finger in the place. He had the air of a man perfectly content with himself and his surroundings. "My friend," he said, "I boarded this steamer with only one thought in my mind—Craig. At the present moment I feel myself compelled to plead guilty to a complete change of outlook. The horrors of the last few months seem to have passed from my brain like a dream. I lie here; I watch these white winged birds wheeling around us; I feel a new life stealing through me. Is Craig really as bold? Was it really he whom Miss Laura here saw? At the present moment I really do not care. I learn from the steward who arranged my berth this morning that we are bound for India. I am very glad to hear it. It is some time since I saw Bombay, and the thought of these long days of complete peace fills me with a most indescribable satisfaction."

Quest granted a little as he knocked the ash from his cigar. "Not much of a bloodhound about the professor," he remarked. "What about you, Lenora?" "She smiled at him." "I agree entirely with the professor," she murmured, "except that I am not quite so sure that I appreciate the rhythmical movement of the boat, as he seems to. For the rest, I have just that feeling that I would like to go on and on and forget all the horrible things that have happened, to live in a sort of dream and wake up in a world from which Craig had vanished altogether."

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