The New Adventure$ of J. Rufu$ Wallingford.

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WRITTEN BY
George Randolph Chester
Author of "Get-Rich-Quick-Wallingford"

DRAMATIZED BY
Charles W. Goddard
Presented in Collaboration With The
Famous Pathe Players

INTRODUCING
BURR McINTOSH ..... J. Rufus Wallingford
MAX FIGMAN ..... Blackie Daw
LOLITA ROBERTSON ..... Violet

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"A Rheumatic Joint"

TWO long rows of heads floated upon a canal of blue ooze. Between the rows ran a wide plank walk, and nailed to the edge of this, in front of each head, was a waist-high pole bearing a pasteboard tablet, upon which were ruled lines and figures and writing. A weird light slanted down from the blue grass, of which the low roof and south wall were composed. A bell rang. Every head turned with a sudden expression of blue tinted hatred toward a door at the upper end of the plank walk.

The door opened and through it came a pompous fat German, whose hair and mustache and beard and stomach all projected so violently forward that, to support them, he was compelled to walk sway-backed and spraddle-legged.

The bald head with the funny purple nose upon its face, down near the center of the upper row, turned near the center of the jovial head which was its neighbor.

"Zwick!" it said in mournful explanation.

"And so that's the main assassin," returned the jovial one, whose big, pink face was the only smiling countenance in the assemblage.

"Dr. Zwick," repeated the baldhead, still mournfully.

"I can't make up my mind whether he's a colored supplement or a comic valentine?" chuckled the big one, "but whichever he is, he's the peerless leader in his class, take it from me."

Dr. Zwick gazed down sternly upon his prey, like a Spartan schoolmaster who has made up his mind to thrash the entire class to be sure of punishing one culprit.

"There has been entir-r-rely too much taking it like a choke, this Zwick 'Fr-r-eat-ment of R-r-rheumatism," he rolled in a throaty bawl of authority. "It iss no chokke! Beghkinning f-r-rom tonight, there will be no sitting upon porches, no-r visiting in r-r-r-rooms, after-r nine o'clock. Her-r-r-mann, the temper-r-ratures!"

The first six comprised a banker, a lawyer, a senator, a broker, a railway president, and even a doctor, yet none of them resented the indignity of method except with his glaring eyes.

Dr. Zwick cleared his throat.

"Number-r one-so-five-three," he charged sternly, "you were yesterday in the villasche and ate some r-r-rred meadt! Now for one week you haff no meadt at all. Honus, three ounces!"

The face of the banker festooned itself into a dozen hideous grimaces as the deadly dose approached him. The tears streamed from his eyes as he finished the torture, and he spluttered and coughed and wheezed.

"Water!" he gasped, in the shrill falsetto of acute strangulation.

Dr. Zwick, already puffing with indignation over the sins of the next head, turned upon the banker a pitiless eye.

"Iss no water!" he thundered, and left the banker to choke.

"Why does he stand for that!" inquired the newcomer.

"Because," rasped Cornelius Rockewell, "sometimes this cures."

"Thank you," returned the pink-faced patient. "You've handed me the right tip." So remarking he climbed up his mud-concealed stepladder and stood on the plank walk, a pink-headed statue of Obesity in dripping blue-bronze. He had met Cornelius Rockewell in the intimacy of the mud bath, and further acquaintance would be easy.

"I suppose there's about seventy billion dollars out there pounding little rubber balls over the billowy green," observed Wallingford, musingly, indicating the crowded golf links, where age and decrepitude solemnly and vainly sought to renew youth and vigor. "I wonder if only rich men get rheumatism!" and he scowled thoughtfully at Cornelius Rockewell, who had proved to be calm outside the bath.

"I have it," argued the bald-headed and blue-nosed man, who, seen in the afternoon sun on the porch of the sanitarium, proved to be the only seedy-looking individual in the place. His near-sighted eyes were now protected by thick, steel-rimmed spectacles, and the awkward stoop in his shoulders explained why he had kept his chin in the mud. Altogether, he was so frayed and threadbare a man, both as to personality and clothing, that Wallingford, an opportunist who made his own opportunities, would scarcely have wasted any time with him except that he was baffled as to how to approach old Rockewell.

"Well, we can't all be handsome," consoled J. Rufus, glancing down at the cracked and dingy little handbag which represented the whole of the bald-headed man's traveling necessities. The bald-head was going away on the rickety stage, having completed the cure.

"No, nor rich," replied the blue-nosed one mournfully; "nor even lucky like Dr. Zwick. Now here is me, with the greatest medical discovery of the age, compelled to stop my experiments and give my last cent to old Zwick, because I couldn't use my hands."

Wallingford looked at this man anew. "Rheumatism dope?" he suggested.

"The germ of senility," stated the other with quiet pride. "I've segregated it, and I've been for thirty years working on the segregation of the microbe which destroys it."

"The germ of senility," repeated Wallingford thoughtfully. "The bug that causes old age."

The bald-headed man suddenly awoke. He removed his old slouch hat, and hitched his chair closer.

"The germ which causes old age," he repeated impressively, touching Wallingford's knee with his knuckles by way of emphasis. "It begins its work in the lower intestine, and gradually spreads throughout the entire system, destroying the tissues and sapping vitality everywhere."

"Great!" agreed Wallingford with a smile. "If you last enough enough to get a patent on your trained microbes, a man with the price will be able to live until he is hanged or shot."

"Why, I wouldn't sell it," protested the professor, shocked. "Snailey's Senility Microbe must be a philanthropic gift to the world."

"I don't know but what it is a better plan," assented Wallingford.

He looked out at Rockewell, playing clock golf industriously, with the hope that it would make him live longer, and speaking to no one. The best way to reach Cornelius was from the outside! "I'm going with you, Snailey!"

"Which is the laboratory, and which is the kitchen sink?" demanded Wallingford looking around the ill-favored quarters of Prof. Snailey with a catlike shudder of discomfort.

There was no answer from Snailey. From the moment of his entrance he had spent all his time over the rows upon rows of sealed test-tubes which occupied a low bench in front of the one window, and he had examined each one with the aid of a huge hand-lens. Now he gave a sudden exclamation of delight.

"Look!" he cried to Wallingford, holding up one of the test-tubes. "The finest germs I ever saw! Beautiful! Perfectly beautiful!"

"I believe you're right," agreed Wallingford, surveying it at a respectful distance. "It's a full two shades dirtier than the rest of them."

"Wait," urged the professor. "I'll show you something that will do your eyes good." Placing a tiny drop of liquid from the test-tube upon a thin glass slide, he covered it with another, clamped the two together, and set it upon a rack, while he reverently took from its velvet-lined case a speckless, high-power microscope, its brasswork shining like sunlight. On the stage of this he placed his prepared slide, and focussed for a breathless five minutes.

"Now look!" he cried to Wallingford triumphantly.

"I expected to see a bug," Wallingford presently announced in disappointment.

"A germ is not a bug," chided Snailey with a sudden return of his mournfulness. "But look again, and remember what you see, for now comes the wonderful part of the exhibit."

He was already preparing another slide, placing between the two glasses a drop taken from a jar containing a thick, bluish-white substance. Wallingford did as he was told, and observed a number of small oval discs formed of concentric black and white rings, each bearing a delicate fringe around the edge, like infinitesimal cogs. These discs were slowly revolving about each other where their fringes touched. Now and then one released from its neighbor made a sudden dart across the vast space of its sixty-fourth of an inch world, and joined another group to begin again its slow revolutions. One of these was particularly active, and Wallingford, beginning to be highly interested, named it Joe upon the spot.

"There's nothing to it, professor," he declared, turning from the miscroscope with a sigh of relieved tension, "little Joe in here is a bug, and a bad bug at that, no matter what you say. And are these the boys that make us take to hair tonic and store teeth?"

"Let's cut out the prelims, and have the main bout," suggested Wallingford. "I want to put a bet down on little Joe."

The bewildered Smalley looked at him solemnly and put the new compound slide upon the stage where the previous ones had been. Wallingford had his eye to the microscope before Smalley was through with his manipulation, and a grin of delight spread itself upon his face. The little fringed discs flew, as if by magnetic attraction, to the edges of the white once, and whirled rapidly about them until they were drawn into the vortex, when they suddenly lost their color and motion, and were blotted out entirely.

"Well, I win," declared Wallingford, triumphantly. "Little Joe is weak and wobbly, but he's still in the ring. But say, professor, it was a grand little fight, and I'll make it worth more money to each of us than you could stack in a railroad ferry."

"No no!" protested Snailey. "This is to be a philanthropy, I tell you."

"Sure, it's to be a philanthropy," agreed Wallingford. "Let's you and I go right out and incorporate."

Wallingford rushed out into the hall of his rented brown-stone front, to greet his three callers.

"Tell it to us quick, Jim," ordered Blackie. "The only thing that we could make out of your telegram was that you were crazy."

"I am," chuckled Wallingford; his broad shoulders heaving and his eyes half-closing. Crazy with enthusiasm. Our antique friend, Rockewell," he explained, as he led the way back through the richly decorated hall, "is so cautious that he hides his money from himself; and the only way we can make Cornelius restitute is with a twenty-six-mile gun. This is it," and he threw open the door of the study.

"Oh!" a little shriek from Violet, as she stepped back into the arms of her sister. She had been confronted, on entering the study, by a human skeleton, dangling in the corner, its jaws distended with a frightfully developed sense of humor.

"Come right on in and get acquainted, girls," invited Wallingford carelessly, placing chairs for the ladies. "I've gone in for science, on this Rockewell case, and we're staging the greatest discovery of the age. I have a bald-headed old onion upstairs mixing some dope to keep men young."

"Now, listen, Blackie. Here's who you are," and from a drawer in the table Wallingford produced a very much soiled oilskin packet, from within which he took a clean, folded parchment, illumined with an extremely gaudy collection of ribbons and seals. Opening this document, which was printed in Latin and three colors, to say nothing of gold initials, he spread it before Blackie and the girls. "That is a diploma of bacteriology from the Universitie von Schliesholtz-Sturmstadt. I bought it for $15 from a poor devil who couldn't make a living with it in this country, and is now pressing trousers and dipping clothes in cheap gasolene at a dollar and a half a throw. Your name as you will see by the lithograph there, is August Schoppenschmittenmeister von Universitie von Schliesholtz-Sturmstadt!"

"You see, this Snailey is such a dummy," began Wallingford. "He's too real. So you have to be the display scientist, demonstrator, and chief of the medical staff at the Snailey Sanitarium for the Promotion of the Cure of Senility."

"I'm relieved to find it's such a cinch," declared Blackie. "I was afraid you might want me to undertake some difficult stunt or other. This diploma thing makes it easy. But who am I to talk with—newspaper men or scientific sharps?"

"Both," replied Wallingford.

"What language do I speak?"

"Schmierkase English," replied Wallingford, "and as little of that as possible. For your native tongue, you may jabber a little Kartoffelkloeseburg."

"Sure," agreed Blackie. "What is it?"

"I don't know myself," confessed Wallingford, "but I do know this much: that in Germany dialects are so thick and so different that a Mecklenburger and a Dusseldorfer have to make signs if they try to talk together, and they do say that Mecklenburgers can't understand each other. So if you take a dialect that nobody ever heard about, you can get away with it."

"Do you suppose hog Latin would do?" inquired Blackie earnestly. "I know three or four hog Latin dialects we used to use when I was a kid.

THEY REHEARSED THE SCENE CAREFULLY

ROCKWELL SAW EVERTHING

WALLINGFORD TAKES A CURE

Dothegoo youthego knowthego, thithegis wothegun?"

"Say it again!" cried Violet in delight.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Wallingford. "Do you remember that gibberish? By George, it's been a thousand years since I heard it or thought of it. Here's your laboratory, Blackie."

Blackie surveyed his new place of business with becoming gravity.

"Where's the push-button?" he demanded. "There's one thing I forgotten—a pair of old green carpet-slippers embroidered with pink roses." He approached the elaborate array of scientific apparatus with a careless hand, which Wallingford stayed.

"You're a precocious brat," he warned, "but there are some things you don't know. You're liable to connect the guzoozicus with the slambang, and knock the dickens out of the pizazabo."

"Well, we'll get another one then," consoled Blackie.

"I rigged up this place for Snailey, but he couldn't stand prosperity. So I had to move his old outfit up in the attic, and cart up a load of cobwebs. Now he's happy. Come up and look him over."

In the attic they found Snailey.

Willingford gravely introduced the girls, then Blackie.

"Prof. Snailey, shake hands with Herr Dokter August Schoppenschmittenmeister, of the Universitie of Schliesholtz-Sturmstadt, the eminent bacteriologist of whom I told you."

Snailey jumped up, sniffed two pinches of paprika, and actually sneezed in his excitement, before he grasped Blackie fervently by the hand.

"Delighted to meet you. I am sure. You are just in time, Doctor—Doctor—Doctor—" and Snailey looked helplessly at Wallingford.

"Just Doctor," easily prompted the matter of ceremonies.

"You are just in time, doctor, to take part in a microcosmical step, which though apparently trifling, will, I am sure, result in vast ultimate advancement toward securing the hardy germination which is essential to the elimination of certain intro-germinal difficulties which you will readily comprehend."

Wallingford shivered, but Blackie never batted an eyelash.

An hour later, dripping, but triumphant, Blackie rejoined Wallingford and the girls in the library.

"Well, can you do it?" asked Wallingford, anxiously.

"With my hands tied behind me," responded Blackie confidently. "But say, old man, get me a map of Germany and a mouthful of mush. I want to practice that dialect. My tongue's so dry with it, right now, that you could strike a match on it. J. Rufus, I'm perfectly willing to play in this game, and I love it; but I wish you'd tell me why this Snailey onion can't be trusted to do his own trick?"

"Because a newspaper reporter would corner him in four minutes," replied Wallingford, in deep disgust.

"What are we to do?" asked Fannie, turning her brown eyes eagerly to Wallingford.

"Plenty," Wallingford, chuckling, looked from one to the other of the sisters. "Have either of you girls a trusty, elderly female relative who looks like either of you?"

"Aunt Patty!" The girls jumped up, and clapped their hands. "She'd look like Violet's twin, if she were younger," explained Fannie.

The newspapers "ate it up" to use Blackie Daw's expressive way of putting the matter. At Wallingford's call they flocked to his place of business, where Jackson's whiskers and absolutely humorless face inspired confidence to begin with. They were ushered in upon Wallingford, and Billy the Yegg, where the genial J. Rufus, while compelling respect by his breadth of waistcoat and richness of cravat, at the same time removed any possible chill by his own irresistible smile and handshake of goodfellowship. They drank Wallingford's wines and liquors with avidity and smoked his fine cigars and imported cigarettes with eagerness. When he had them well soothed, he led them upstairs in droves, and in the very first crowd were such stars as Jimson, of the Orb, and Hazard, of the Sphere.

"Fake, I guess," pronounced Hazard, carelessly. "Too much scenery to be anything else. What do you think of it?"

"Fake, I guess," agreed Jimson.

"Going to use the story?"

"Am I going to call for my envelope on Saturday," demanded Jimson indignantly. "I should say I will use the story; and they'll use it at the office, not less than three columns of it; and if the Orb don't top it with a double-page Sunday feature I'll quit the sheet. I won't work on a dead one."

They suddenly stopped talking as they reached the head of the stairs, for Wallingford had paused before the door of the front apartment, and held up a plump, warning hand.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I am about to show you the secret of life. Before admitting you to this room, however, I must warn you that this laboratory is full of dangerous chemicals and still more dangerous germs, and I must ask you to kindly refrain from handling any of the articles in the laboratory, this, as a matter of safety to yourself and to myself and Dr. Schoppenschmittenmeister."

"Gentlemen, Dr. Schoppenschmittenmeister," introduced Wallingford with a flourish, and then suddenly stopped as he caught sight of Blackie and choked and turned red in the face and longed for a handkerchief to stuff in his mouth; for Blackie, whom he had not seen in costume, had somewhere secured inch-and-a-half lifters to put on his shoes, making himself an inch and a half taller and making his trousers an inch and a half too short; he had doffed his customary Prince Albert coat, which had made his slender figure rather a thing of grace, and in its stead, wore a long, skintight gray sweater which came down to his hips; over this he had a short monkey-jacket, which hit him at about the waist, and left not less than six inches of wrist revealed; upon his head he wore the black silk skull cap, upon his eyes the big wooden-rimmed spectacles, and slowly uncoiling his tremendous gaunt lenth from his low chair at the laboratory bench, he removed his four-foot porcelain pipe from his mouth with a wave, and, his feet close together bowed extravagantly low.

"Cherdelmenss," he said, "I am blessed by meeting mid you."

One of the younger reporters giggled; some others smiled, but all of them took the Herr Doktor most seriously. Jimson and Hazard, suddenly growing distrustful of each other, dropped apart. Somehow or other the very extravagance of Blackie's makeup was convincing.

"Chendelmenss, be blessed to be seated yed," he invited with another wave of his pipe; and this was the height of his audacity; for, while there were nearly a score of visitors in the room, there were only two chairs besides his own; yet Wallingford, earnestly desiring to shake Blackie until his teeth chattered, was the only one who observed the discrepancy.

Had any of the others noticed the circumstance it would have been forgotten immediately for in the next instant there was a terrific explosion upon a chemical work-table in one corner of the room, followed by a shower of thin glassware and a wreath of beautiful green smoke, which puffed to the ceiling and gently unrolled. Blackie merely turned quietly in that direction.

"Aw-w-w—," he observed in a diminishing tone of mild regret, "id iss always habbening."

Following this, Wallingford led them up another flight of stairs. Hazard and Jimson found themselves once more thrown together as they followed to the attic.

"This, gentlemen," said Wallingford in a hushed tone at the door of the attic, "is the laboratory of Professor Julius Alexander Snailey, the discoverer of the wonderful cure for old age. For thirty years he has worked for the benefit of humanity, with no thought of reward.

He threw open the door, then quickly closed it again. A less adroit student of human nature than Wallingford might, at that juncture, have explained that the professor was engaged in an operation to important to allow of interruption; instead J. Rufus turned to them with a grin positively irradiating his big pink face; then he closed his eyes and chuckled, his big shoulders shaking and his broad chest heaving. The entire throng of professional cynics smiled with him out of sheer sympathy; some of them chuckled with him; all of them liked him.

"I told you," said he, "that the professor was doubtless engaged in some delicate experiment. Look for yourselves, but be quiet about it."

Once more he threw open the door. Those nearest it started in, stopped, and tiptoed back out, snickering. The professor, clad only in his underclothing and shoes, and with a half-eaten bread-and-cheese sandwich clutched in his hand, was lying upon his cot, snoring most melodiously. It was a stroke of genius to show them that sight; they all had a good look, and at the same time their practiced eyes took in, and catalogued, and inventoried all the strange assortment of articles in Snailey's laboratory.

Wallingford led them down-stairs into the dining room, where, once more showing his knowledge of newspaper men, he had ordered the table to be crowded with all sorts of handy lunch, and with both hollow and plain-stemmed wine glasses and small glasses with no stems at all; moreover, there were steins for those who preferred them. When the air of the room was blue enough with smoke, he made them a little speech.

The great Snailey cure for old age, he advised them, sthanding, big and smiling, at the head of his generous table, was never to be exploited for profit. It was the insouciant Hazard who, emboldened by the comfortable goodfellowship of the occasion, interrupted the speech at that point.

"I'll have to rewrite my introduction, Mr. Wallingford," he chimed out. "You looked like a specialist in profits to me."

Wallingford joined the laugh himself, and the laugh was a relief to all of them, for Hazard had voiced the heretofore politely suppressed opinion of the multitude.

"You had my number," Wallingford admitted. "I am a highly specialized expert in personal profits, and I expect to be paid for my work here. A rich man, found worthy of being given the treatment, will be soaked until it sprains a tendon in his bank account; a poor man won't pay a cent. Now, boys, I've handed you the whole game. You know what to say and what not to say, and it's up to you."

Good men were to live forever now, if the papers were to be believed, and what the papers had to say had only begun. All through the remainder of the week the wonderful boon to humanity was on the front pages in type of all sizes and degrees of blackness, and on Sunday they fairly dripped with the new food for public imagination. Of course, they all had pictures of Wallingford, Daw, and Snailey, and of the germ of senility.

With the second day came the scientists, sent by the papers, and Wallingford, with no fear whatever, passes these right over Blackie's head and his own, loosing them directly upon Snailey, knowing quite well that they hated each other so much that whatever one said the other would dispute. Luck favored him, there, for the first man to come was Prof. Begol, of Pimpunk University, who poohpoohed the entire idea in a two-column interview, and as Prof. Begol had recently achieved an international reputation by promulgating a self-evident fact in a novel manner, naturally every other scientist with a vestige of self-respect tore Prof. Begol's opinion to splinters. Thus did science support Prof. Snailey's discovery and the practical application which Wallingford alleged for it.

Newspaper men were permitted to be present at all these interviews.

They were enjoying a quiet drink and smoke with Wallingford, whom they had come to like immensely, when Jeremiah D. Crimper was announced.

Wallingford drew himself together in pleasant anticipation.

"Very glad to talk with you, Mr. Crimper. I'm sure you will excuse the presence of my friends here. I have no secrets from them, whatsoever, and you may talk right ahead."

Mr. Crimper took two chews at his flaccid lips.

"What practical arrangements are you making to put this senility cure on the market?"

"The plan is very simple, Mr. Crimper. The Society for the Promotion of the Snailey Cure for Senility, a corporation not for profit, has been organized with a million dollars capital stock, and its books are now open for subscriptions."

"Then," said Mr. Crimper, suddenly releasing his chin from its hiding place, "I think I may offer you a subscription."

Mr. Wallingford was instant gravity; almost instant sternness. "I thank you for the offer, Mr. Crimper," he said, politely enough, but still firmly, "but before accepting it I shall be compelled, on behalf of Mr. Snailey's great philanthropy, to inquire into Mr. Crimper himself and his claims for an elongated existence."

Mr. Crimper now showed signs of hesitation, and glanced once more, in question of their presence, toward the four highly interested auditors; as they showed no signs of going, nor Wallingford of dismissing them, he made the best of the situation. "Well," he stated, "I am here as the representative of another."

Wallingford's face instantly hardened.

"I'm afraid your principal will have to present his own case," he declared, "the selection of candidates and sponsors is a very grave matter, Mr. Crimper.

"Exactly," agreed that gentleman with a loose and leathery contortion which might be considered to be a smile. "To my principal there can be no possible objections upon any grounds. I handle his philanthropies, and I think I may say without exaggeration that his benefactions are the largest in the world."

"You don't mean Cornelius Rockewell?"

"The same," Mr. Crimper proudly assured him. "Mr. Rockewell has had the professor of bacteriology of Rockewell College examine into the claims of Dr. Snailey."

Mr. Wallingford arose; he smoothed his waistcoat; he expanded his chest to its fullest possible breadth; his brows thickened, and he glared loftily down at the wondering Crimper.

"There is no use in discussing the matter, Mr. Crimper," he said sternly. "Mr. Rockewell must die at the hour his Maker intended. He did not get his great wealth honestly! Besides, why did he not come here in person?"

Mr. Crimper made three more vain attempts to present argument in favor of Cornelius Rockewell; then, with one mighty gulp, he swallowed his chin and went home, while the gentlemen of the press trod upon one another's heels in their frantic haste to get to their respective papers with the tremendous sensation.

"Cornelius Wallingford who had spent two days at the window which overlooked the street corner, rushed back into the study. "Everybody to your places."

There was a mad scramble. Violet dashed up to the attic to hide; Fannie, bewitching in a nurse's uniform, slipped out across the side hallway and into the wing of the house; Onion Jones, looking like an Easter egg, with his totally bald head and his gaudy butler's uniform, stalked solemnly to the front door, while Wallingford and Blackie headed for the cellar.

"Remember now, Onion," admonished Wallingford, pausing for a moment at the door. "You're a dummy."

"Don't worry, Jim, he can't miss it," grinned Blackie, as they disappeared through the door.

Cornelius Rockewell surveyed the stupid looking butler with impatience, when he was told there was no one home.

"When'll they be back?" he rasped, looking at his old-fashioned silver watch.

"Ten minutes, sir," responded Onion disinterestedly, gazing out over Cornelius' shoulder. Who shall I say called, sir?"

"I'll wait," snapped Cornelius, stalking in.

He looked around him sharply when Onion ushered him into the study which Billy-the-Yegg now occupied in gloomy state. He took note of the yellow-backed books, and the medical journals, and the pictures of doctors joyously dissecting, and of the wooden-eyed Onion.

"What do you know about this senility cure?" he suddenly demanded.

"Nothing, sir," responded Onion dully. "I'm new."

Mr. Rockwell eyed the stupid butler with growing interest.

"What have you seen?"

I don't like to say, sir; it gives me the creeps. There's something right now, in the other part of the house——" He jerked with his thumb in the direction of the rear hall, and relapsed into chill silence.

"Over there?" Rockewell rose, and looked in the general direction of "over there?" "What is it? I say, what is it?" Cornelius' voice rasped with impatience. "If you can't speak, show it to me. Here." He produced another bill from his pocket.

Onion Jones looked at the bill for a long time, then he slowly took it, and, with many stops and hesitations, led the way out of the study, across the rear hall, and into the wing of the rear building. He opened the door cautiously, then motioned Rockewell to follow.

The room was fitted like a hospital ward. In the center was an operating table, on which was a still form covered with a white sheet. Over the face was a mask.

"Dead?" whispered Rockewell.

"No," whispered Onion. "I sneaked in this little corner room and looked through the glass panel when they brought her in last night," and he pointed to a small enclosure which had been partitioned off in the corner. "They laid her out then, and doped her, and I heard 'em say she's going out tomorrow morning, to begin life over again."

Onion had approached the operating table, and now he stealthily lifted the mask from the head of the figure.

"My heavens!" he gasped, stepping back in astonishment.

"What's the matter?" Rockewell was nervously fingering his cheeks, as he looked down at the still features.

"Why, last night, when they put her on this table, she was a shriveled old woman with snow-white hair! Look at her now!"

The woman, a remarkably handsome lady, was apparently about fifty. Her cheeks were filled out, and beneath her skin was the pink glow of health. Her hair was iron-gray, and a curling lock of it lay over her round, white neck.

"It's the same woman, though," puzzled Onion. "I can tell by the earrings." He lifted the sheet at one side.

"Yes, it's the same woman.

"There's the ink stain on the side of her finger."

A little bell tinkled at the head of the table, and at that sound Onion hastily replaced the sheet and the mask, and dragged the nervous Cornelius into the little corner enclosure. "It's the nurse," he whispered.

Looking out through the glass panel, they saw Fannie Warden come in, trim and pretty in her stiff white uniform and white cap. With business-like promptness, the nurse lowered a white silk cage from the ceiling, which covered the operating table completely. She turned a button, and there was the whirr of a motor for about two minutes; then she lifted the cage to the ceiling, and, suppressing her giggle over the whimsical mummery on which Blackie Daw had insisted, she walked sedately out of the room.

"And you say she was a withered white-haired old woman last night!" demanded Cornelius, trembling with eager excitement.

"Skinny," said Onion, "walked with a cane, waxy face, white as chalk. I'm goana quit my job."

"And you say she's going out tomorrow noon?"

"To begin life over again," repeated Onion Jones solemnly.

It was ten-thirty-two exactly when Onion Jones, the next morning, led Cornelius Rockewell on tiptoe into the mysterious room, and lifted the mask. This time it was Cornelius who stepped back with an exclamation of astonishment. The woman who lay there was a young and beautiful girl, with glossy golden hair, one curling lock of which lay across her round, white neck. A young beautiful girl, with the bloom of health in her cheeks, and the rich blood of youth in her ruby-tinted lips.

"The same woman!" faltered Rockewell, overawed by the sight. "The features are unmistakable!" He looked at the earrings. The same! With nervous haste he uncovered the fair white hand which had exchanged the angularity of fifty for the plumpness of twenty, and on the finger was the telltale ink stain! The highly excited old millionaire gave another keen scrutiny to the face. The features were unmistakable, even with this marvelous dropping away of thirty years since the day before! On the fair white brow——

The little bell tinkled on the head of the operating table, and Cornelius, leaving Onion Jones to replace the mask, started on a tottering run for the little enclosure in the corner.

"Hush!" he warned Onion Jones, as that stupid butler joined him, and he watched for the pretty nurse to come through the door.

Again the white silk cage was lowered. Again the whirring motor was turned on; out, when the cage was lifted, the young and beautiful girl was wide awake. She sat up, bewildered. She looked at the lock of golden hair, and her sparkling blue eyes filled with tears while her cheeks flushed rosy red.

"Why, I'm young!" she cried. "Young!" and sprang from the couch.

"You mustn't overexert yourself," warned the pretty nurse. "Wait, I'll get you a wheel chair."

"No!" sang the miracle. "I'm young! Don't you understand! Young!" and, mad with happiness, she danced to the door, and disappeared, followed by the nurse.

"How soon will your master return?" shrilly demanded Cornelius.

"I've got money! Money enough to reach anybody! Do you hear? Money!"

"Where's the little book, girls?" asked Wallingford, mopping his perspiring face as he and Blackie Daw walked into the parlor of Aunt Patty Warden's house.

"Honestly, did he give you the money, Mr. Wallingford?" incredulously cried Annie.

"It's been in my bank and out again," chuckled J. Rufus, and taking the little book which Fannie handed him, Wallingford crossed off the name of "Cornelius Rockewell." Here's my certified check for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to add to the Warden Restitution Fund. Besides that, I got the annual endowment which will let Snailey experiment for the rest of his life, and the entire cost of our plant down there, and about twelve thousand dollars to go into our expense fund."

"The celebration is already arranged," laughed handsome Aunt Patty, her mind now at ease. She had no moral scruples so far as old Cornelius Rockewell was concerned. He was one of those who had so ruthlessly robbed her nieces. "Take your partners, young folks, and come into dinner."

(Continued Next Sunday.)

"77"
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