

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
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SYNOPSIS.

Miss Innes, spinster and guardian of Gertrude and Halsey, established summer headquarters at Sunnyside. Amidst numerous difficulties the servants deserted. As Miss Innes looked up for the night, she was startled by a dark figure on the veranda. She passed a terrible night, which was filled with unaccountable noises. In the morning Miss Innes found a strange link cuff button in a chamber hanger. Gertrude and Halsey arrived with Jack Bailey. The house was swarmed by a revolver shot. A strange man was found shot to death in the hall. It proved to be the body of Arnold Armstrong, whose banker father owned the country house. Miss Innes found Halsey's revolver on the lawn. He and Jack Bailey had disappeared. The link cuff button mysteriously disappeared. Detective Jamieson and the coroner arrived. Gertrude revealed that she was engaged to Jack Bailey, with whom she had talked in the billiard room a few moments before the murder.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

"The quarrel, I believe," he persisted, "was about Mr. Armstrong's conduct to you, Miss Gertrude. He had been paying you unwelcome attentions."

And I had never seen the man! When she nodded a "yes" I saw the tremendous possibilities involved. If this detective could prove that Gertrude feared and disliked the murdered man, and that Mr. Armstrong had been annoying and possibly pursuing her with hateful attentions, all that, added to Gertrude's confession of her presence in the billiard room at the time of the crime, looked strange, to say the least. The prominence of the family assured a strenuous effort to find the murderer, and if we had nothing worse to look forward to, we were sure of a distasteful publicity.

Mr. Jamieson shut his notebook with a snap and thanked us.

"I have an idea," he said, spragging of nothing at all, "that at any rate the ghost is laid here. Whatever the rapings have been—and the colored man says they began when the family went west three months ago—they are likely to stop now."

Which shows how much he knew about it. The ghost was not laid, with the murder of Arnold Armstrong, he, or it, only seemed to take on fresh vigor.

Mr. Jamieson left then, and when Gertrude had gone upstairs, as she did at once, I sat and thought over what I had just heard. Her engagement, once so engrossing a matter, paled now beside the significance of her story. If Halsey and Jack Bailey had left before the crime, how came Halsey's revolver in the tulip bed? What was the mysterious cause of their sudden flight? What had Gertrude left in the billiard room? What was the significance of the cuff link and where was it?

CHAPTER VI.

In the East Corridor.

When the detective left he enjoined absolute secrecy on everybody in the household. The Greenwood club promised the same thing, and as there are no Sunday afternoon papers, the murder was not publicly known until Monday. The coroner himself notified the Armstrong family lawyer, and early in the afternoon he came out. I had not seen Mr. Jamieson since morning, but I knew he had been interrogating the servants. Gertrude was locked in her room with a headache, and I had luncheon alone.

Mr. Harton, the lawyer, was a little, thin man, and he looked as if he did not relish his business that day.

"This is very unfortunate, Miss Innes," he said, after we had shaken hands. "Most unfortunate—and mysterious. With the father and mother in the west, I find everything devolves on me; and, as you can understand, it is an unpleasant duty."

"No doubt," I said absently. "Mr. Harton, I am going to ask you some questions, and I hope you will answer them. I feel that I am entitled to some knowledge, because I and my family are just now in a most ambiguous position."

I don't know whether he understood me or not; he took off his glasses and wiped them.

"I shall be very happy," he said with old-fashioned courtesy.

"Thank you, Mr. Harton, did Mr. Arnold Armstrong know that Sunnyside had been rented?"

"I think—yes, he did. In fact, I myself told him about it."

"And he knew who the tenants were?"

"Yes."

"He had not been living with the family for some years, I believe?"

"No. Unfortunately, there had been trouble between Arnold and his father. For two years he had lived in town."

"Then it would be unlikely that he came here last night to get possession of anything belonging to him?"

"I should think it hardly possible," he admitted. "To be perfectly frank, Miss Innes, I can not think of any reason whatever for his coming here as he did. He had been staying at the club house across the valley for the last week, Jarvis tells me, but that only explains how he came here, not why. It is a most unfortunate family."

He shook his head despondently,



"The Quarrel, I Believe."

and I felt that this dried up little man was the repository of much that he had not told me. I gave up trying to elicit any information from him, and we went together to view the body before it was taken to the city. It had been lifted on to the billiard table and a sheet thrown over it; otherwise nothing had been touched. A soft hat lay beside it, and the collar of the dinner-coat was still turned up. The handsome, dissipated face of Arnold Armstrong, purged of its ugly lines, was now only pathetic. As we went in Mrs. Watson appeared at the card-room door.

"Come in, Mrs. Watson," the lawyer said. But she shook her head and withdrew; she was the only one in the house who seemed to regret the dead man, and even she seemed rather shocked than sorry.

Before Mr. Harton left, he told me something of the Armstrong family. Paul Armstrong, the father, had been married twice. Arnold was a son by the first marriage. The second Mrs. Armstrong had been a widow, with a child, a little girl. This child, now perhaps 20, was Louise Armstrong, having taken her stepfather's name, and was at present in California with the family.

"They will probably return at once," he concluded, "and part of my errand here today is to see if you will relinquish your house here in their favor."

"We would better wait and see if they wish to come," I said. "It seems unlikely, and my town house is being remodeled." At that he let the matter drop, but it came up unpleasantly enough, later.

At six o'clock the body was taken away, and at seven-thirty, after an early dinner, Mr. Harton went. Gertrude had not come down, and there was no news of Halsey. Mr. Jamieson had taken a lodging in the village, and I had not seen him since mid-afternoon. It was about nine o'clock, I think, when the bell rang and he was ushered into the living room.

"Sit down," I said grimly. "Have you found a clew that will incriminate me, Mr. Jamieson?"

He had the grace to look uncomfortable. "No," he said. "If you had killed Mr. Armstrong, you would have left no clews. You would have had too much intelligence."

After that we got along better. He was fishing in his pocket, and after a minute he brought out two scraps of paper. "I have been to the club-house," he said, "and among Mr. Armstrong's effects, I found these. One is curious; the other is puzzling."

The first was a sheet of club note-paper on which was written, over and over, the name "Halsey B. Innes." It was Halsey's flowing signature to a dot, but it lacked Halsey's case. The ones toward the bottom of the sheet were much better than the top ones. Mr. Jamieson smiled at my face.

"His old tricks," he said. "That one is merely curious; this one, as I said before, is puzzling."

The second scrap, folded and re-folded into a compass so tiny that the writing had been partly obliterated, was part of a letter—the lower half of a sheet, not typed, but written in a cramped hand.

—by altering the plans for—rooms, may be possible. The best way, in my opinion would be to—the plan for—one of the—rooms—chimney.

That was all.

"Well," I said, looking up. "There is nothing in that, is there? A man

ought to be able to change the plan of his house without becoming an object of suspicion."

"There is little in the paper itself," he admitted, "but why should Arnold Armstrong carry that around, unless it meant something? He never built a house, you may be sure of that. If it is this house, it may mean anything from a secret room—"

"To an extra bathroom," I said scornfully. "Haven't you a thumbprint, too?"

"I have," he said with a smile, "and the print of a foot in a tulip bed, and a number of other things." The oddest part is, Miss Innes, that the thumb-mark is probably yours and the footprint certainly."

His audacity was the only thing that saved me; his amused smile put me on my mettle, and I ripped out a perfectly good scallop before I answered.

"Why did I step into the tulip bed?" I asked with interest.

"You picked up something," he said good-humoredly, "which you are going to tell me about later."

"Am I indeed?" I was politely envious. "With this remarkable insight of yours, I wish you would tell me where I shall find my four-thousand-dollar motorcar."

"I was just coming to that," he said. "You will find it about 30 miles away, at Andrews Station, in a blacksmith shop, where it is being repaired."

I laid down my knitting then and looked at him.

"And Halsey?" I managed to say. "We are going to exchange information," he said. "I am going to tell you that, when you tell me what you picked up in the tulip bed."

We looked steadily at each other; it was not an unfriendly stare, we were only measuring weapons. Then he smiled a little and got up.

"With your permission," he said, "I am going to examine the card room and the staircase again. You might think over my offer in the meantime."

He went on through the drawing room, and I listened to his footsteps growing gradually fainter. I dropped my pretence at knitting and, leaning back, I thought over the last 48 hours. Here was I, Rachel Innes, spinster, a granddaughter of old John Innes of revolutionary days, a D. A. R., a Colonial Dame, mixed up with a vulgar and revolting crime, and even attempting to hoodwink the law! Certainly I had left the straight and narrow way.

I was roused by hearing Mr. Jamieson coming rapidly back through the drawing room. He stopped at the door.

"Miss Innes," he said quickly, "will you come with me and light the east corridor? I have fastened somebody in the small room at the head of the card room stairs."

I jumped up at once.

"You mean—the murderer?" I gasped.

"Possibly," he said quietly, as we hurried together up the stairs. "Some one was lurking on the staircase when I went back. I spoke; instead of an answer, whoever it was turned and ran up. I followed—it was dark—but as I turned the corner at the top a figure darted through the door and closed it. The bolt was on my side, and I pushed it forward. It is a closet, I think. We were in the upper hall now. If you will show me the electric switch, Miss Innes, you would better wait in your own room."



Trembling as I was, I was determined to see that door opened. I hardly knew what I feared, but so many terrible and inexplicable things had happened that suspense was worse than certainty.

"I am perfectly cool," I said, "and I am going to remain here."

The lights flashed up along that end of the corridor, throwing the doors into relief. At the intersection of the small hallway with the larger, the circular staircase wound its way up, as if it had been an afterthought of the architect. And just around the corner, in the small corridor, was the door Mr. Jamieson had indicated. I was still unfamiliar with the house, and I did not remember the door. My heart was thumping wildly in my ears, but I nodded to him to go ahead. I was perhaps eight or ten feet away—and then he threw the bolt back.

"Come out," he said quietly. There was no response. "Come-out," he repeated. Then—I think he had a revolver, but I am not sure—he stepped aside and threw the door open.

From where I stood I could not see beyond the door, but I saw Mr. Jamieson's face change and heard him mutter something, then he bolted down the stairs, three at a time. When my knees had stopped shaking, I moved forward, slowly, nervously, until I had a partial view of what was beyond the door. It seemed at first to be a closet, empty. Then I went close and examined it, to stop with a shudder. Where the floor should have been was black void and darkness, from which came the indescribable damp smell of the cellars.

Mr. Jamieson had locked somebody in the clothes chute. As I leaned over I fancied I heard a groan—or was it the wind?

CHAPTER VII.

A Sprained Ankle.

I was panic-stricken. As I ran along the corridor I was confident that the mysterious intruder and probable murderer had been found, and that he lay dead or dying at the foot of the chute. I got down the staircase somehow, and through the kitchen to the basement stairs. Mr. Jamieson had been before me, and the door stood open. Liddy was standing in the middle of the kitchen holding a frying pan by the handle as a weapon.

"Don't go down there," she yelled, when she saw me moving toward the basement stairs. "Don't do it, Miss Rachel. That Jamieson's down there now. There's only trouble comes of hunting chews, they lead you into horrible pits and things like that. Oh, Miss Rachel, don't—" as I tried to get past her.

She was interrupted by Mr. Jamieson's reappearance. He ran up the stairs two at a time, and his face was flushed and furious.

"The whole place is locked," he said angrily. "Where's the laundry key kept?"

"It's kept in the door," Liddy snapped. "That whole end of the cellar is kept locked, so nobody can get in the clothes, and then the key's left in the door, so that unless a thief



Bolted Down Stairs, Three at a Time, was as blind as—as some detectives, he could walk right in."

"Liddy," I said sharply, "come down with us and turn on all the lights."

She offered her resignation, as usual, on the spot, but I took her by the arm, and she came along finally. She switched on all the lights and pointed to a door just ahead.

"That's the door," she said sulkily. "The key's in it."

But the key was not in it. Mr. Jamieson shook it, but it was a heavy door, well locked. And then he stooped and began punching around the keyhole with the end of a lead pencil. When he stood up his face was exultant.

"It's locked on the inside," he said in a low tone. "There is somebody in there."

"Lord have mercy!" gasped Liddy, and turned to run.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Where It Goes.

"That man made an immense fortune out of a simple little invention." "Indeed! What did he invent?" "Invent? Nothing, you dub! He was the promoter!"

NOT TO BE SAVED

REPUBLICAN PARTY IS FACING CERTAIN DEFEAT.

Its Failure to Redeem its Pledges to Revise the Tariff Downward Will Not Be Forgiven by the People.

The Republican party is entering this congressional campaign with a great flourish of trumpets and self-laudation because railroad rates, commerce court, twin statehood, postal savings banks—all pet legacies of the Roosevelt administration—have been handled by the Taft administration as the Republican convention platform pledged they would be.

The fatal flaw in this reasoning is the nation's comparative indifference to any side issues, when it is groaning under the Republican party's failure to redeem its tariff pledge.

True, the lowering of tariff duties was not one of "my policies." Roosevelt not only dodged the tariff issue for seven years, but left Taft to meet a crisis he knew was coming.

The American people are indifferent as to who precipitated the tariff crisis. They simply know that when the crisis came the Republican party showed its allegiance to the money power by foisting the Aldrich-Taft law on the country.

Standpat statesmen make the mistake of their lives if they imagine that the people will forgive the tariff fiasco because "my policies" have been jammed through congress.

The tremendous upheaval within the Republican ranks alone proves that the Aldrich-Taft tariff, with its higher cost of living, is the fatal mistake for which not even "my policies" can make amends.

HAVE THE REMEDY AT HAND

People Alone Are to Blame in Submitting to the Rapacity of the Tariff Barons.

Hutchins Haggood, in a current magazine article, quotes authority for the startling assertion that high prices are driving thousands of salaried men to sacrifice their children's education.

In other words, as the cost of living rises the average salaried head of a family must increase his income by the work of younger members of the family. Boys and girls are taken from school and college. Their earnings must help keep the wolf from the door.

This is not confined to wage-earners in the technical sense of that term. It applies to the semi-professional classes—teachers, ministers, bank clerks, employees of mercantile houses, office employees generally.

In ten years the average cost of living has increased about 50 per cent. Average incomes are not more than 10 per cent. higher than ten years ago.

Every article of clothing, every item in grocery bills, even house rent, has gone up. The maintenance of social standards is threatened at its foundation.

Happily, salaried workers have the ballot. They can use it to put an end to robbery of their homes by eastern tariff barons, licensed by the Aldrich-Taft tariff, thanks to the Aldriches and Boutells in congress, to plunder the people.

Democracy's Appeal.

The Democratic party has an opportunity to win one of the greatest victories in its entire history. But its standard-bearers in the congressional campaign must be men whom the people will instinctively trust.

This is a year when factional politics and spoils hunting should be forgotten in the choice of congressional candidates. It is a year for picking out the highest grade men to represent the party in congress.

In a sense the Democratic party, as well as the Republicans, is on trial this year. For it is the historic party of the people—and the people never needed a mighty defender more than now.

Democracy's appeal to American voters will be strong and effective just in proportion as the character of the party's candidates is above reproach.

Our National Extravagance.

Where only a few years ago we had the billion-dollar congress we now have the billion-dollar session and the two-billion-dollar congress. Unless this waste of public money is checked by ballots at the polls, how long before we shall have the two-billion-dollar session and the four-billion-dollar congress?

Here is one issue that comes to the Democratic party ready made from the hands of its opponents. The money exactions of no trust, of no monopoly, have equalled the money exactions of the United States government since the spirit of Rooseveltism began to dominate public expenditures.

Back to the old Tilden platform—Retrenchment and Reform!—New York World.

Champ Clark on the Tariff.

Mr. Champ Clark at Tammany hall sounded the keynote of the campaign for control of the next house. The tariff is the issue, and he promises that a Democratic majority shall mean a bill reviving the Payne law "down to a revenue basis." Then, if the senate neglects or rejects the measure, an appeal will be at once made to the country in the presidential race.

CHANGES IN THE SENATE

Eleven States at This Election Could Give a Majority for Revision Downward.

Does the "east" realize that low-tariff sentiment, similar to that exhibited in the Cleveland campaigns, if expressed this fall, would give us not only a "revision downward" house of representatives, but a senate as well?

At this year's election the Democrats are certain to win the following seats now held by Republicans: Missouri, Nebraska and Nevada.

The following states, which were close or Democratic before 1896, choose legislatures this fall which elect United States senators to succeed Burkeley of Connecticut, Du Pont of Delaware, Keam of New Jersey, Depew of New York and Dick of Ohio.

A revision downward tidal wave, like the old Cleveland fight, would give us Democratic successors of Carter of Montana, Ekins of West Virginia and Flint of California.

Every one of the above states went Democratic in the tariff fights of 1890 and 1892, so that it is not unreasonable to expect them to go that way again on the same issue following the passage of the recent Payne-Aldrich grab, particularly as the senators who represent them and whose successors will be chosen by the legislatures about to be elected are all rabid high-tariff men of the extreme stand-pat variety.

A change from Republican to Democratic in the above eleven seats would increase the present Democratic low-tariff membership from 30 to 41, leaving out of consideration the two protectionists from Louisiana.

A majority of the senate is 47. So with the low-tariff insurgents, La Follette, Cummins, Dooliver, Clapp, Nelson and Hristov, we have a "revision downward" majority in the senate. If the people really want "revision downward" they can get it now by voting for the Democratic candidates for the state legislature in the eleven states above mentioned where United States senators are to be chosen.

Well May the Ordinary Citizen Ponder Whether For the Better or Worse.

A special dispatch from Boston, published recently, is of interest to every American citizen.

The summer heira from the white house to Beverly revealed the surprising fact that the president and his family have eight automobiles.

The Massachusetts tax-gatherer demanded license fees. The state attorney general ruled that no fees could be collected from the Tariffs, because the automobiles belong to the government. The license department decided that no licenses could be issued without fees.

Gov. Draper solved the problem by paying the license fees for the eight Tariff automobiles out of the contingent fund provided for the governor of Massachusetts.

Ordinary Americans, who do not govern but bear the cost of government can not help wondering why eight automobiles should be required by the president, in addition to \$25,000 a year traveling expenses, and the yards Sybil and Mayflower with their yearly annual upkeep.

Times certainly have changed since Thomas Jefferson rode up to the white house, led his horse to the fence, and entered upon the duties of president of the United States. From the point of view of the taxpayer they can hardly be said to have changed for the better.

Consumer Always the Loser.

Canada has numerous stores of wheat, lumber and farm products of all kinds. Our people could buy these natural products at great advantage but for the preposterous tariff wall.

Similarly, our manufacturers are practically shut out of Canadian markets in favor of British products by the dominion's retaliatory tariff. Large American concerns have to duplicate their plants on Canadian soil at great expense before they can break into the Canadian market at all.

Of course, American consumers are the losers at both ends. They pay the tariff tax on raw material from Canada and also pay the extra profits on manufactured goods to make up factory losses abroad.

The American consumer does this solely because the trusts have forbidden the lawmakers at Washington to interfere with their excessive profits. Otherwise we would have Canada's vast resources to draw upon as a huge lever in reducing the cost of life's necessities.

Bullinger a Stumbling Block.

Bullinger says he is not a quitter and is going to fight it out. This has a hint of lack of complete harmony between Theodore and William. It is given out in the Democratic papers—the administration organs preserving silence—that Roosevelt has pledged his support to Pointdexter in the senatorial race in Washington, because Pointdexter is fighting Bullinger. This may not be entirely correct, but if there is any bunker over which Taft will have difficulty in driving the harmony ball to the Roosevelt green, that bunker will be Bullinger.

Secretary Bullinger shows his childlessness when he talks about a "conspiracy" between Pinchot and Garfield to get him out of office. It is a small man magnifying himself who accents a conspiracy when two men agree that his acts are open to criticism.