

# The TIME LOCK

Author of "The Silver Blade," "The Paternoster Ruby," Etc.

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## SYNOPSIS.

Rudolph van Vechten, a young man of leisure, is astonished to see a man enter No. 1313, a house across the street from the Powhatan club, long unoccupied and spoken of as the House of Mystery. Several persons at regular intervals enter No. 1313. Van Vechten expresses concern to his friend, Tom Phinney, regarding the whereabouts of his cousin and fiancée, Paige Carew. A man is forcibly ejected from the house. Van Vechten and Tom follow the man and find him dead in the street. Van Vechten is attracted by the face of a girl in the crowd of onlookers surrounding the body. Later he discovers the girl gazing at him with a look of scorn from the windows of the mysterious house. Detective Flint calls on Van Vechten to get his version of the tragedy. Tom Phinney goes alone on a yachting trip. He recognizes among some persons in a passing motor boat two men whom he had seen enter the House of Mystery. He sees one of them, a Mr. Callis, on shore later and follows him. Tom is seized, blindfolded and taken to a house. He hears a girl named Jessie, evidently the daughter of the man in authority, question Van Vechten. A sweet-voiced girl later protests against the roughness of his captors. Van Vechten calls on his uncle, Theodore Van Vechten, big man in Wall street and known as the "Man of Iron," in search of information regarding the whereabouts of Paige Carew. Detective Flint shows Van Vechten a gold mesh purse found in the House of Mystery. Van Vechten recognizes it as belonging to Paige Carew. The sweet-voiced girl helps Tom Phinney escape. A message from London reports that two ladies resembling Miss Carew and her companion, Mrs. Devereaux, sailed for New York some time previously. It develops that the ladies visited the English home of Temple Bonner, owner of the House of Mystery. Flint has a theory that they are connected with the mystery of No. 1313. It is recalled that Temple Bonner was in love with a daughter of Compton Schuyler who married Max Willard. The other daughter married a man named Devereaux. Bonner and Willard were intimate friends. A search is started for Willard.

## BOOK II.

### CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"Humph! Shouldn't think Flint would have been that careless," was his immediate conclusion. It did not occur to him that somebody already might be within, but contented himself with the belief that the detective had neglected to make fast the door after his visit Sunday afternoon.

Settling the incident thus to his own satisfaction, he entered and closed the door behind him. He glimpsed into the kitchen, and promptly withdrew with a shudder. Off on one side a huge range stood, red with rust, and everywhere were cobwebs and layer upon layer of dirt. A sleek rat darted into the denser shadows, and the opening door disturbed hundreds of enormous cockroaches. Some scuttled away, but others remained motionless and watched him with malignant eyes that sparkled weirdly in the half-light.

He shook off his feeling and advanced toward the stairs, which loomed dimly before him. But thenceforward he moved with utmost circumspection, pausing frequently at some imagined sound, or to determine the nature of some shape unexpectedly confronting him in a darker corner.

And scarcely had he arrived at the first floor than his strained attentiveness was rewarded by a sound that was unmistakable—one that brought him up short—a sound of human voices. A distinctly unpleasant tingling sensation played over his scalp and at the back of his neck. The temporary alarm, however, instantly vanished, and instead he was filled with wonder and curiosity at this unlooked-for exploration.

Who could have chosen a spot so desolate and God-forsaken in which to carry on a conversation?

He recalled the unlatched door; manifestly whoever was inside with him had entered by means of a key, precisely as he had been equipped to do, and had neglected to fasten the door after them. At any rate, the matter was worth investigating; then, if he saw that he was an intruder, he would quietly withdraw.

When they first started him the voices were so low that he was unable to determine anything about them—how many were talking, or in what portion of the house the speakers were. Then of a sudden he received a fresh shock of surprise. One of the voices rose in a note of anger.

It was a woman's—nay, a girl's. And now he was able to locate the source of the sounds. They came from somewhere in the second story and toward the rear of the house. With infinite caution, he crept up the front stairway to the upper hall.

The voices sounded incessantly, first a man's, hoarse and rumbling, then the girl's, then sometimes both together. Van Vechten paused at a realization that the two were quarreling and that the girl's voice was quivering with intense indignation.

He advanced more rapidly, and presently came to a halt before a closed door, on the farther side of which the two disputants without doubt were engaged. And then perforce he became an eavesdropper.

"Go, go, go!" cried the feminine voice, shrill with exasperation and anger. "I tell you, I will not stand this annoyance. Whatever in the world possessed you to follow me I can't imagine. Go—get out of my sight. I don't want to hear a word you have to say!"

At the next words Van Vechten started so violently that, had the unseen couple been less absorbed in

their quarrel, they must have heard him. The girl was still speaking.

"You have done many things to anger me that I have overlooked, John Callis; but your following me here is just a bit more than I can endure. Now I mean to tell father just how you have been harassing me, and mark my words, he will put a stop to it. Why did you come after this? I decided that I was to do the errand alone!"

"You know," Callis' deep voice growled. "You take precious care that I don't get to talk to you anywhere else."

"And why?" returned the girl, witheringly. "Because you can't be sensible. No, no; don't interrupt," she commanded. "If you have followed me here to learn what I think of you, then listen to me. I'll make my meaning so plain that it will penetrate even to your dull understanding."

"There was a time that I liked you, John—how could I help it when in so many ways you have been so loyal? Even now I admire that loyalty."

"A dog's!" the man contemptuously interjected; but the girl ignored the interruption.

"But you are so obtuse that you cannot see when your familiarities are distasteful? I am sure I have never encouraged you by word or look. Cannot you realize that by persisting in them you only excite loathing and fear?"

"But, no, I am not afraid of you," the voice abruptly softened. "And I don't loathe you, John; it's wicked for me to say such a thing; but you will drive me to loathing you if you persist



"I Can Hold This Ruffian—at Least Until You Make Good Your Escape."

In making love to me. I do not love you, I never have, I never can."

A roar from the man cut short her words.

"Damn it, I'll make you love me!" The words rattled harshly in his throat. "Do you think I have been working and waiting all these years from any sense of duty or loyalty to your father? Then the more fool you. I mean to do it—do you hear me? You! I mean to do it—the first that you should be my wife; I have meant it all along; I mean it now more than ever. And—by God! you shan't turn me down in this way! I won't—I can't stand it!"

There was a pause. The stillness of the mouldering corridors and empty chambers seemed to gather and weigh down upon the listener like a palpable substance. What should he do; retreat without letting his presence be known, or open the door and interfere? So far the girl had demonstrated her ability to handle the situation, and he shrank from appearing as an officious meddler; yet, for the life of him, until he was vouchsafed at least a hint of the altercation's outcome, he could not depart.

The silence was quite abruptly broken by the girl's voice, cold now and biting.

"John, stand away from the door and let me by."

No response from the man.

"Are you going to let me pass?"

And again, apparently, he was unable to contain himself.

"No!" he burst forth. "If all my months of waiting and giving—myself, your—your—if my only payment is to be scorn and contempt I suppose you'd call it—then, by heaven! I'll make you suffer! I'll break your spirit; I'll—"

"John!" in a shocked voice. He did not heed; all restraint was thrown to the winds, and he drove on in a reckless frenzy of speech.

"You think I care what happens to me, do you? Huh! Blame little you know about John Callis. If I can't have you I don't care a whoop in hades what becomes of me. If I can't have you nobody else shall. Scream, if you want to—yell at the top of your voice—there's nobody to hear you."

"John!" The girl was now genuinely alarmed. "Don't talk so wildly! You'll regret this. And don't—don't look at me like that!" Another brief pause and she concluded pleadingly: "Please, John, let me go!"

"I shan't"—doggedly.

"What do you mean to do with me, John?"

"I don't know. I haven't made up my mind. Maybe I'll kill you—if you drive me to it."

The girl must have rushed toward the door, desperately striving to win past him, and just as certainly he must have caught her and stayed her steps. What followed was pretty much confused in Van Vechten's mind. There was a sound of scuffling; the incensed listener in the hall heard the girl cry out in an agitated voice: "Oh! You are hurting me!" which was immediately followed by a stifled shriek that chilled the blood in his veins.

Next instant he had grasped the knob and thrown all his weight against the door.

It was unbolted and crashed open with explosive violence. His irruption promptly quieted the disturbance. The man—it was the sandy-complexioned man—stood with dropped jaw, staring blankly at the intruder.

And the girl? His heart leaped. His whole being was suffused with a warm glow. The girl that he had despised of ever seeing again, what unhappy melancholia had brought her to this peril? And what unrecognized message had prompted him to arrive upon this scene so opportunely?

After the first shock of pleased surprise, Van Vechten flamed, then turned to ice. His regard traveled to the man in a narrowed look of anger that left him white to the lips. It was a hard look, an ugly, wicked look that spelled danger.

But his lifelong habit of repression checked any violent display of feeling on his part. The spell was broken when he composedly advanced a step farther into the room, not for an instant moving his steel regard from the man. All of a sudden his thin lips twisted in an odd little smile that was not at all pleasing to see.

"Well?" he said quietly. Save for the unmistakable undercurrent of menace, the tone might have been affable.

So profound was the other man's stupefaction that he mechanically released the girl's wrists and fell back a pace. Only a quick anticipation of his act saved her from falling to the floor; as it was she staggered backward until a dust-coated library table stayed her. At this she clutched, clinging to its edges, and, wide-eyed, stared from one to the other of the men. Her tormentor's brain, obviously, stirred only sluggishly; but all at once the sullen features were congested with blood, the veins on his forehead swelled, and all his fury—now redoubled—was directed at Van Vechten.

"Where in hell did you come from?" he snarled venomously.

"Anyhow, not the same neighborhood that bred you," Van Vechten eyed him a moment longer with inexorable disfavor. "Good Lord!" he added. "What a nasty brute you are!"

Nothing less than paralyzing amazement, apparently, restrained Callis from leaping upon Van Vechten and finishing him out of hand. And perhaps, too, there was a quality in the young man's bearing that had something to do with it—his unflinching nerve, the mastery of his look, the inevitable dominance of caste and breeding. With a little bow, Van Vechten turned again to the girl.

"You are at perfect liberty to depart," he said, with calm, dignified deference. "And, really, I think you had better do so at once. I can hold this ruffian—at least until you make good your escape. Once you are in the street, you know, and you are safe."

By this time she had regained something of her own composure; but the cool assurance of this punctiliously garbed young man, the obvious determination and air of authority that lay behind his courtesy, evoked from her



## SOME REMARKS ON INCOMES

Pertinent Just Now When the Subject Is a Matter of General Discussion.

Incomes are now being taxed. It is, therefore, desirable that something should be known about them. An income is anything which you cannot live upon expressed in terms of lawful money. Lawful money is anything which will be accepted by the members of a state legislature, or a police captain, or your wife. Incomes were created for two purposes; to lie about and to live beyond. Many people who will not have to pay any are complaining to their friends and neighbors about the way they are oppressed by the income tax. This is one of those natural phenomena which no scientist has been able to explain. Incomes vary in size according to

a look of startled wonder. The heavy lashes half-veiled her dark eyes as they wavered to Callis, then back again to him; it was a covert, all-appraising glance. Then her lips curled scornfully.

What was passing in her mind was only too plain to Van Vechten. He flushed hotly. Already he had made the same comparison; and he fostered no illusions respecting the possible outcome of a combat.

Never before had he been confronted by any man so irresponsible with rage, or one with whom it was so hopeless to attempt to reason; never in all his life had he struck a man in anger; but he knew there was just one way in which he could succor this disdainful beauty, and that would be to pit his endurance against the bully's strength, to guard himself as much as possible against his repeated onslaughts, and delay pursuit of the girl until he (Van Vechten) was pounded into insensibility—or mayhap slain. He did not blink that contingency. Yet, without the slightest hesitation, he had resolved to offer himself to the sacrifice.

He was guilty of no error of judgment now, however; Callis gave him but scant time to reflect, then rushed, not at him, but at the girl. Simultaneously Van Vechten plunged headlong forward, interposing his lighter body between.

Amid the stress and confusion of violent situations, the human mind is capable of the most ridiculous pranks. And at this critical moment Van Vechten's prompted him to commit such an absurdity.

"Get out of here, you little idiot!" he yelled at the girl, who seemed frozen to the table.

She hesitated one second longer, then, with a stifled scream, slipped into the hall and closed the door after her.

It would not be pleasant to record what happened in that room. There is nothing heroic in a baited rat darting desperately from a trap into the jaws of a waiting terrier, nor in the spectacle of a lamb being prodded to the shambles. For perhaps five minutes Van Vechten succeeded in preventing Callis from grasping the door-knob—a period in which he was reduced from a correctly dressed, rather handsome young gentleman to an object that was no more than a tattered, bloody semblance of humanity—and then he sank into oblivion.

Callis stared at his motionless adversary. Why didn't the fool move? The answer came promptly, unbidden: Because he couldn't. He would never move again, unless, perchance, it should be to rise up and follow him—out of the room, along the echoing halls, down the dusty stairs, into the street; whithersoever he went, turn and double, twist and dodge, there would be that Thing at his side, until at last—

And there was yet another shadow in this silent house, one other fearsome shade; suppose it should detach itself from the rest; suppose the two shadows should get together and enter into an unholy pact to work his undoing?

John Callis clenched his teeth to stop their chattering. His starting glance skirted the room and sought to penetrate the shadows, which every minute were looming larger and larger and more obscure, then was irresistibly drawn back to the shapeless blurred heap in the corner. He did not look away from it again.

Swallowing convulsively, licking his dry lips with a dry tongue, he backed noiselessly, step by step, until he brought up against the door. Never for an instant did the horrible dread of the two shadows blending and following him pause in its unnerving suggestion.

He felt for the knob like one in a nightmare. Finding it, he stealthily opened the door and slunk away.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## ANTIENS KNEW OF GLAZING

Proof That Early Inhabitants of Mexico Used Process in the Manufacture of Pottery.

The discovery by Henry C. Mercer of Daylestown, Pa., that the ancient inhabitants of Mexico used a glazing process in the manufacture of their pottery has revolutionized the views of ceramic experts at the University of Pennsylvania, and may lead, says American Art News, to the discovery of beds of clay suitable for use today.

Mr. Mercer, who is an expert on tiling and a former curator of the University museum, during a recent study of Mexican potteries at the museum, had his attention called to the variance in workmanship in certain collections. He promptly classified the potteries as possessing two different kinds of clay, and was surprised to find that a distinct glaze was still apparent.

The ancient Egyptians, says Mr. Mercer, did not glaze their works, the Chinese adopting this precaution at a later date to make their vessels impervious to water. Civilization had been established by this time, however, and the use of the glazing art by prehistoric Mexicans may unfold interesting ceramics.

## ERUPTION ON CHILD'S BODY

R. F. D. No. 2, Jackson, Mo.—"Our daughter who is ten months old was suffering from an eruption all over the body. In the beginning they were small red spots and afterwards turned to bloody sores. We tried all sorts of ointments but they did not procure any relief for our child. She cried almost day and night and we scarcely could touch her, because she was covered with sores from head to foot."

"We had heard about the Cuticura Soap and Ointment and made a trial with them, and after using the remedies, that is to say, the Soap and the Ointment, only a few days passed and our child could sleep well and after one week she was totally well." (Signed) August F. Bartels, Nov. 25, 1912.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free, with 32-p. Skin Book. Address postcard "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston."—Adv.

## Height of Contempt.

Flora Anne Steele, the English novelist, said at her hotel in New York: "I, as a successful writer, am accustomed to be treated with respect, but your immigration department treated me with such contempt that it reminded me of your story about the Indian."

"A Sioux Indian, according to this story, went to a storekeeper of his reservation and said he would like to buy a gun."

"Oh, but," said the storekeeper, jocularly, "I don't like to sell you a gun—you might kill a soldier with it."

"Huh," grunted the impassive Indian, "for kill soldiers Indians use a stick."

## Lucky Thirteenth Man.

"Frederick, I'm sure you will forgive me," said the beautiful girl, bowing her head, "when you know the true reason of my breaking our engagement so soon. But when I became engaged to you I forgot—"

"What is it, Gladys," he murmured sadly. "Be not afraid. Is it that you love another?"

"No, indeed," responded the girl indignantly, her eyes flashing at him through a veil of tears. "But you know how superstitious I am—I forgot that you would be exactly the thirteenth man I've been engaged to."

## Crafty John.

"Mr. Snapp, I want two pounds of Mrs. Annie Dallam's butter. If it isn't Mrs. Dallam's butter I won't take it." The proprietor turned to his other customers. "Some people in my business," he said blandly, "don't like particular customers, but I sure do. It's my delight to serve them and get them what they want. I will attend to you in a minute, John." "All right," said John, "and be sure to get Mrs. Dallam's. A lot of my wife's relatives are visiting at my house and I don't want them to come back again."—Dearborn (Mo.) Democrat.

## CAUSE AND EFFECT

Good Digestion Follows Right Food.

Indigestion and the attendant discomforts of mind and body are certain to follow continued use of improper food.

Those who are still young and robust are likely to overlook the fact that, as dropping water will wear a stone away at last, so will the use of heavy, greasy, rich food, finally cause loss of appetite and indigestion.

Fortunately many are thoughtful enough to study themselves and note the principle of cause and effect in their daily food. A N. Y. young woman writes her experience thus:

"Sometime ago I had a lot of trouble from indigestion, caused by too rich food. I got so I was unable to digest scarcely anything, and medicines seemed useless."

"A friend advised me to try Grape-Nuts food, praising it highly and as a last resort, I tried it. I am thankful to say that Grape-Nuts not only relieved me of my trouble, but built me up and strengthened my digestive organs so that I can now eat anything I desire. But I stick to Grape-Nuts."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

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