

The Mystery of the Boule Cabinet

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

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ing it—or rediscovered an old way. In other words, if you can get a fraction of a drop of it in a man's blood you kill him by paralysis quicker than if you put a bullet through his heart.

"Nothing can save a man, then?" I questioned.

"Nothing on earth. Freyninghisen thinks it is a new discovery. I don't think some one has dug up one of the old Medici formulae. Maybe it was placed in the secret drawer, so that there would never be any lack of ammunition for the mechanism."

"Godfrey," I said, "are you still bent on fooling with that thing?"

"More than ever. I'm going to find that secret drawer, and if the fangs strike—well, I'm ready for them. See here what I had made today."

He drew from his pocket something that looked like a steel gauntlet such as one sees on suits of old armor. He slipped it over his right hand.

"You see it covers the back of the hand completely," he said, "halfway down the first joint of the fingers. It is made of the toughest steel and would turn a bullet. And do you see how it is depressed in the middle. Lester?"

"Yes," I said. "I was wondering why you had it made in that shape."

"I want to get a sample of that poison. Think what it is, Lester—the poison of the Medici!"

I sat for a moment looking at him half in amusement, half in sorrow. He caught my glance and put the gauntlet back into his pocket.

I got out the cablegram and passed it across to him. He read it with brows contracted.

"That seems to put a puncture in our little romance, doesn't it?" I asked at last. "Armand's man hasn't called yet? I suppose he'll be around to-morrow."

"You will have to turn the cabinet over to him, of course."

"Why, yes; it belongs to him—at least it doesn't belong to Vantine."

"Well, in spite of this," he said, "I am still interested in that cabinet. Lester, and I wish you would keep possession of it as long as you can. At least I wouldn't give it up until he delivered to you the other cabinet which Vantine really bought."

"Oh, I'll make him do that," I agreed quickly. "That will no doubt take a few days—longer than that if Vantine's cabinet is in Paris."

"And now let us go down and have a look at this one," he said, "as we intended doing. You will think me foolish, Lester, but even that cablegram hasn't shaken my belief in the existence of that secret drawer."

"And all the rest?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "and all the rest."

CHAPTER VII.

The Burning Eyes.

GODFREY said nothing more until we stopped before the Vantine house, but I could see, from his puckered brows, how desperately he was trying to untangle this quirk in the mystery.

"The siege seems to have been lifted," I remarked, as we alighted.

"The siege?"

"Parks telephoned me that your esteemed contemporaries had the place surrounded. I told him to hold the fort!"

"Poor boys!" he commented, smiling. "To think that all they know is what Grady is able to tell them! Which room is the cabinet in?" he asked.

"The anteroom is there at the left, where those two shuttered windows are. The cabinet is in the corner room. There is one window on this side and two on the other."

Parks answered the bell almost in stammer, and I could tell from the way his face changed—how glad he was to see me.

"Well, Parks," I said, as we stepped inside. "Everything is all right, I hope?"

"Yes, sir," he answered. "But—but I heard a movement behind me, as I saw Parks my coat, and turned to see Rogers sitting on the cot."

"How?" I said, "so you're able to be here?"

"Yes, sir," he answered without hesitating. "I thought I'd come to see how the little company."

Parks smiled a little sheepishly and looked at me. "Lester," he said, "I'm in a nervous and jumpy here by the way, but I just want to have some of that stuff, especially after the way you've been treating Godfrey."

frey quickly. "What do you mean?"

"We've got a burglar alarm on the windows, sir. It's usually turned off in the daytime, but I thought I'd better leave it on today, and it rang about the middle of the afternoon. I thought at first that one of the other servants had raised a window, but none of them had. Something went wrong with it, I guess."

"Did you take a look at the windows?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. A policeman came to see what was the matter, and we went around and examined the windows, but they were all locked. It made me feel kind of scary for a while."

"Does the alarm work now?"

"No, sir. The policeman said there must be a short circuit somewhere and that he'd notify the people who put it in. But nobody has come around yet to fix it."

"We'd better take a look at the windows ourselves," said Godfrey. "You stay here, Parks. We can find them all right, and I don't want you to leave that door unguarded for a single instant."

We went from window to window and Godfrey examined each of them with a minuteness that astonished me, for I had no idea what he expected to find. But we completed the circuit of the ground floor without his apparently discovering anything out of the way.

"Let's take a look at the basement," he said, and led the way downstairs with a readiness which told me that he had been over the house before. In a kind of lumber room, standing before its single small window, his electric torch in his hand, he made a discovery.

"Look here!" he said, his voice quivering with excitement, and threw a circle of light on the jamb of the window at the spot where the upper and lower sashes met.

"What is it?" I asked after a moment. "I don't see anything wrong."

"You don't? You don't see that this house was to be entered tonight? Then what does this mean?"

With his finger nail he turned up the end of a small insulated wire. And then I saw that the wire had been cut.

"Yes," said Godfrey dryly, "that romance of mine is looking up again. Somebody was preparing for a quiet invasion of the house tonight—somebody, of course, interested in that cabinet."

"He wasn't losing any time," I ventured.

"He knew he hadn't any to lose. When you put those wooden shutters up you warned him that you suspected his game. He knew if the alarm was on it would ring when he cut the wire."

"Why can't we ambush him?" I suggested.

"We might try, but it will be a mighty risky undertaking, Lester."

"One risky undertaking is enough for tonight," I said, with a sigh, for my belief in the existence of the secret drawer and the poison and all the rest of it had come back with a rush.

"All right," Godfrey said. "But I'll fix this break."

He got out his penknife, loosened two or three of the staples which held the wire in place, drew it out, scraped back the insulation and twisted the ends tightly together.

"There," he added, "that's done. If the invader tampers with the window again he will set off the alarm. But



I Saw That the Wire Had Been Cut.

I don't believe he'll touch it. I think he already knows the little game is discovered."

"How would he know it?" I demanded incredulously.

"If he is keeping an eye on this window, as he naturally would do, he has seen my light. Perhaps he is watching me now. Now for the cabinet."

He led the way back upstairs, and we went into the room which Godfrey had

the cot, and, looking at him more closely, I could see that he was white and shaken.

"Have you anything to tell us this evening, Rogers?" I asked kindly. But he only shook his head.

"I've told you everything I know, sir," he answered in a low voice.

"Well," I added briskly, "I'll have to ask you to get up. Move the cot away from the door, Parks."

Parks obeyed me with astonished face.

"You're not going in there, sir?" he protested as I turned the knob.

"Yes, we are," I said, and opened the door. "Is—is—"

"No, sir," broke in Parks, understanding. "The undertakers brought the coffin and put him in it and moved him over to the drawing room this afternoon, sir."

"I'm glad of that. I want all the lights lit, Parks, just as they were last night."

Parks reached inside the door and switched on the electric. Then he went away, came back in a moment with a taper and proceeded to light the gas lights. A moment later the lights in the inner room were also blazing.

"There you are, sir," said Parks, and retreated to the door. "Will you need me?"

"Not now. But wait in the hall outside. We may need you."

I led the way into the inner room.

"Well, there it is," I said, and nodded toward the Boule cabinet. "It isn't too late to give it up, Godfrey."

"Oh, yes, it is," he said coolly, removing his coat. "It was too late the moment you told me that story. Why Lester, if I gave it up I should never sleep again! Draw up a chair and watch me."

He pulled back his shirt sleeves and placed his electric torch on the floor beside the cabinet. Then he paused with folded arms to contemplate this masterpiece of M. Boule.

"It is a beauty," he said at last, and then drew out the little drawers, one after another, looked them over and placed them carefully on a chair.

"Now," he added, "let us see if there is any space that isn't accounted for."

He took from his pocket a folding rule of ivory, opened it and began a series of measurements so searching and intricate that half an hour passed without a word being spoken. Then he pulled up another chair and sat down beside me.

"I seem to be pretty much up against it," he said, "no doubt just as the designer of the cabinet would wish me to be. The whole bottom of the desk is inclosed, and those three little drawers take up only a small part of the space. Then the back of the cabinet seems to be double—at least, there's a space of three inches I can't account for. So there's room for a dozen secret drawers, if the Montepan required so many. And now to find the combination."

He adjusted the steel gauntlet carefully to his right hand and sat down on the floor before the cabinet.

"I'll begin at the bottom," he said. "If there is any spot I miss, tell me of it."

He ran his fingers up and down the graceful legs, carefully feeling every inequality of the elaborate bronze ornamentation. Then he examined the bottom of the table minutely, using his torch to illumine every crevice, but again without result.

Another half hour passed so, and when at last he came out from under the table his face was dripping with sweat.

"It's trying work," he said, sitting down again and mopping his face. "But isn't it a beauty, Lester? The more I look at it the more wonderful it seems."

"I'd point out one thing to you, Godfrey," I said. "If you go on poking about with the fingers of both hands, as you've been doing, you are just as apt to get struck on the left hand as on the right."

"That's true," he agreed. "Stop me if I forget."

There were three little drawers in the front of the table and these Godfrey had removed. He inserted his hand into the space from which he had taken them and examined it carefully. Then, inch by inch, he ran his fingers over the bosses and arabesques with which the sides and top of the table were incrustated. It seemed to me that if the secret drawer were anywhere it must be somewhere in this part of the cabinet, and I watched him with breathless interest. But no hidden spring was touched, no drawer sprang open, no poisoned fangs descended.

"Well," said Godfrey, sitting back in his chair at last and wiping his face again, "now I'll try the upper part."

The upper part of the cabinet consisted of a series of drawers, rising one above the other and terminated by a tall, slender pedestal, its tympanum ornamented with some beautiful little bronzes. The drawers themselves were concealed by two doors, opening in the center and covered with a most intricate design of arabesqued incrustations.

"If there is a secret drawer here,"

said Godfrey, "it is somewhere in the back, where there seems to be a hollow space. But to discover the combination—"

He ran his fingers over the inlay, and then, struck by a sudden thought, tested each of the little figures along the tympanum, but they were all set solidly in place.

"There's one thing sure," he said, "the combination, whatever it is, is of such a nature that it could not be discovered accidentally. It is probably a question of releasing a series of levers, which must be worked in a certain order or the drawer won't open. I'm afraid we are up against it."

"I can't pretend I'm sorry," I said with a sigh of relief. "As far as I am concerned, I'm perfectly willing that the drawer should go undiscovered."

I don't know what it was, for I was conscious of no noise, but some mysterious attraction drew my eyes to the window at the farther side of the room. Near the top of the wooden shutter, which Parks and I had put in place, was a small semicircular opening, to allow the passage of a little light, perhaps, and peering through this opening were two eyes—two burning eyes.

They were fixed upon Godfrey, who was now examining the back of the cabinet, with such feverish intentness that they did not see my glance, and I lowered my head instantly.

"Godfrey," I said in a shaking voice, "don't look up, don't move your head, but there is some one peering through the hole in the shutter opposite us."

Godfrey did not answer for quite a minute.

"Did he see you look at him?" he asked at last.

"No; he was looking at you, with his eyes almost starting out of his head. I never saw such eyes!"

"Did you see anything of his face?"

"No; the hole is too small."

"How high is the hole?"

"Near the top of the window."

Godfrey came back to his chair a moment later, sat down in it and passed his handkerchief slowly over his face. Then he leaned forward, apparently to examine the legs of the cabinet.

"I saw him," he said, "or, rather, I saw his eyes. Rather fierce, aren't they?"

"They're a tiger's eyes," I said, with conviction.

"Well, there is no use going ahead with this while he is out there. Even if we found the drawer we'd both be dead an instant later."

"You mean he'd kill us?"

"He would shoot us instantly. Imagine what a sensation that would make, Lester. Parks bears two pistol shots, rushes in and finds us lying here dead. Grady would have a convulsion, and we should both be famous for a few days."

"I'll seek fame in some other way," I said dryly. "What are you going to do about it?"

"We've got to try to capture him, and if we do—well, we shall have the fame all right! But it's a good deal like trying to pick up a scorpion—of it."

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THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BEN C. CROW, Pastor.

Bible School 10:00 a. m. Morning worship and communion 11:00 a. m. Evangelistic service 7:30 p. m. Prayer meeting Wednesday 7:30 p. m. The attendance at the Christ-

ian Church last Sunday morning and the music at the evening hour made us feel as though our labor was not in vain. This Sunday "Some Appointments Made with Christ" will be the subject of the morning sermon. "Heaven and Earth Are Full of Thy Glory" by Moore will be the anthem sung at the services. In the evening Mr. Crow will speak on "Preaching the Cross" and this will be preceded by a general evangelistic song service in which the new and old hymns will be sung as well as the anthem by Brackett. "Bring Near Thy Great Salvation."

If you have never met with us come this Sunday. If you are not attending elsewhere we will welcome you, in fact, any and all who will are at liberty to enjoy all of our services with us. Come this Sunday.

W. C. T. U. COLUMN

The [Mentor] Assesses the Responsibility for the matter in this column. The Editor.

Officers of W. C. T. U. President, Mrs. Esther Morgan. Editor, Mrs. Lucy L. Whiteaker.

The W. C. T. U. met with Mrs Sandifur. Roll call was answered with scripture text, nineteen responding. Reports were made on the membership contest and the program for Friday's rally. New members were added to the roll. Last week's business was finished, other business transacted and a delicious lunch served, and St. Patrick Souvenirs given by the hostess. Next meeting will be with Mrs. Tapscott and all are invited to attend.

Twenty seven were present at roll call of the L. T. L. in the M. E. church. The lessons, songs and campaign plans took up considerable time. A letter telling the children their part in the campaign was read from the state secretary. The new campaign song was practiced for the anniversary and badges given to those who complied with the rules. The Mercy Supt. reported children learning and interested. All are invited to the meetings.

The National L. T. L. report a membership of 16,000 and reports dues paid the last year as follows: dues \$803.50, Anna Gordan missionary fund \$128, and liberal contributions to the Francis Willard memorial fund, flower mission work, medal contests, mercy department, red letter days and social gatherings. The Oregon children are reported in this grand work.

Spring Seeds THE MAN WHO, APPARENTLY SOWED

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