

The BLIND MAN'S EYES

BY
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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Gabriel Warden, Seattle capitalist, tells his butler he is expecting a caller, to be admitted without question. He informs his wife of a letter which threatens him if he pursues a course he considers the only honorable one. Warden leaves the house in his car and meets a man whom he takes into the machine. When the car returns home, Warden is found dead, murdered, and alone. The caller, a young man, has been at Warden's house, but leaves unobserved.

CHAPTER II—Bob Connery, conductor, receives orders to hold train for a party. Five men and a girl board the train. The father of the girl, Mr. Dorne, is the person for whom the train was held. Philip D. Eaton, a young man, also boarded the train. Dorne tells his daughter and his secretary, Don Avery, to find out what they can concerning him.

CHAPTER III—The two make Eaton's acquaintance. The train is stopped by snowdrifts.

CHAPTER IV—Eaton receives a telegram addressed to Lawrence Hilliard, which he claims. It warns him he is being followed.

CHAPTER V—Passing through the car, Connery notices some hands being outside the berth. He ascertains Dorne's bell has recently rung. Perturbed, he investigates and finds Dorne with his skull crushed. He calls a surgeon, Dr. Sinclair, on the train.

CHAPTER VI—Sinclair recognizes the injured man as Basil Santoine, who, although blind, is a peculiar power in the financial world as an adviser to "big interests." His recovery is a matter of doubt.

CHAPTER VII—Circumstances point to Eaton as Santoine's assailant.

CHAPTER VIII—Eaton is practically placed under arrest. He refuses to make explanations as to his previous movements before boarding the train, but admits he was the man who called on Warden the night the financier was murdered.

(Continued from last week.)

In addition to the recognition of him as the man who had waited at Warden's—which fact anyone at any time might have charged—Connery knew something else which the conductor could not have been expected to know—this dismayed Eaton the more by its indefiniteness. And he saw, as his gaze shifted to Avery, that Avery knew this thing also.

"What do you mean by that question?" he asked.

"I mean that—however innocent or guilty may be the chance of your being at Mr. Warden's the night he was killed—you'll have a hard time proving that you did not wait and watch and take this train because Basil Santoine had taken it and that you were not following him. Do you deny it?" Eaton was silent.

Connery, bringing the paper in his hand nearer to the window again, glanced down once more at the statement Eaton had made. "I asked you who you knew in Chicago," he said, "and you answered 'No one.' That was your reply, was it not?"

"Yes."

"You know no one in Chicago?"

"No one," Eaton repeated.

"And certainly no one there knows you well enough to follow your movements in relation to Mr. Santoine. That's a necessary assumption from the fact that you know no one at all there."

The conductor pulled a telegram from his pocket and handed it to Avery, who, evidently having already seen it, passed it on to Harriet Santoine. She took it, staring at it mechanically and vacantly; then suddenly she shivered, and the yellow paper which she had read slipped from her hand and fluttered to the floor. Connery stooped and picked it up and handed it toward Eaton.

"This is yours," he said.

Eaton had sensed already what the nature of the message must be, though as the conductor held it out to him he could read only his name at the top of the sheet and did not know yet what the actual wording was below. Acceptance of it must mean arrest, indictment for the crime against Basil Santoine; and that, whether or not he later was acquitted, must destroy him; but denial of the message now would be hopeless.

"It is yours, isn't it?" Connery urged.

"Yes; it's mine," Eaton admitted; and to make his acceptance definite, he took the paper from Connery. As he looked down at it, he read:

"He is on your train under the name of Dorne."

The message was not signed.

Connery touched him on the shoulder. "Come with me, Mr. Eaton."

Eaton got up slowly and mechanically and followed the conductor. At the door he halted and looked back; Harriet Santoine was not looking; her face was covered with her hands; Eaton hesitated; then he went on. Connery threw open the door of the compartment next to the washroom and corresponding to the drawing room at the other end of the car, but smaller.

"You'll do well enough in here."

He closed the door upon Eaton and locked it. As Eaton stood staring at the door, he could hear through the metal partition of the washroom the nervous, almost hysterical weeping of

my present course—which, I swear to you, has no connection with the attack upon your father. What Mr. Avery and Connery are planning to do to me, they cannot undo. They will merely complete the outrage and injustice already done me—of which Mr. Warden spoke to his wife—and they will not help your father. For God's sake, keep them from going further!"

Her color deepened, and for an instant, he thought he saw full belief in him growing in her eyes; but if she could not accept the charge against him, neither could she consciously deny it, and the hands she had been pressing together suddenly dropped.

"I'm afraid nothing I could say would have much effect on them, knowing as little about—about you as I do!"

They dashed the door open then—silenced and overwhelmed him; and



They Dashed the Door Open, Then—

they took her from the room and left him alone again. But there was something left with him which they could not take away; for in the moment he had stood alone with her and passionately pleading, something had passed between them—he could give no name to it, but he knew that Harriet Santoine never could think of him again without a stirring of her pulses which drew her toward him.

The following morning the relieving snowplows arrived from the East, and Eaton felt it was the beginning of the end for him. He watched from his window men struggling in the snow about the forward end of the train; then the train moved forward past the shoveled and trampled snow where rock and pieces of the snowplow were piled beside the track—stopped, waited; finally it went on again and waited to take up its steady progress.

The attack upon Santoine having taken place in Montana, Eaton thought that he would be turned over to the police somewhere within that state, and he expected it would be done at the first stop; but when the train slowed at Simons, he saw the town was nothing more than a little hamlet beside a side-track. They surely could not deliver him to the village authorities here.

It made no material difference to him, Eaton realized, whether the police took him in Montana or Chicago, since in either case recognition of him would be certain in the end; but in Chicago this recognition must be immediate, complete, and utterly convincing.

The train was traveling steadily and faster than its regular schedule; it evidently was running as a special, some other train taking the ordinary traffic; it halted now only at the largest cities. In the morning it crossed into Minnesota; and in the late afternoon, slowing, it rolled into some large city which Eaton knew must be Minneapolis or St. Paul. The car here was uncoupled from the train and picked up by a switch engine; as dusk fell, Eaton, peering out of his window, could see that they had been left lying in the railroad yards; and about midnight, awakening in his berth, he realized that the car was still motionless. He could account for this stoppage in their progress only by some change in the condition of Santoine. Was Santoine sinking, so that they no longer dared to travel? Was he, perhaps—dead?

No sounds came to him from the car to confirm Eaton in any conclusion; there was nothing to be learned from anyone outside the car. Eaton lay for a long time, listening for other sounds and wondering what was occurring—or had occurred—at the other end of his car. Toward morning he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X

Publicity Not Wanted.

"Basil Santoine dying! Blind millionaire lawyer taken ill on train!" The alarm of the cry came to him and braced his foot against it.

"Miss Santoine," he pleaded, his voice hoarse with his emotion, "for God's sake, make them think what they are doing before they make a public accusation against me—before they charge me with this to others not on this train! It will not be merely accusation they make against me—it will be my sentence! I shall be sentenced before I am tried—condemned without a chance to defend myself! That is the reason I could not come forward after the murder of Mr. Warden. I could not have helped him—or aided in the pursuit of his enemies—if I had appeared; I merely would have been destroyed myself! The only thing I could hope to accomplish has been in following

column ended with the statement that Mr. Santoine had passed through Minneapolis and gone on to Chicago under care of Dr. Douglas Sinclair.

Eaton stared at the newspaper without reading, after he saw that. He had not realized, until now that he was told that Harriet Santoine had gone—for if her father had gone on, of course she was with him—the extent to which he had felt her fairness, almost her friendship to him. At least, he knew now that, since she had spoken to him after he was first accused of the attack on her father, he had not felt entirely deserted or friendless till now.

But why, if Santoine had been taken away, or was dead or dying, had they left Eaton all night in the car in the yards? Since Santoine was dying, would there be any longer an object in concealing the fact that he had been murdered?

He dressed and then paced back and forth the two or three steps his compartment allowed him. He stopped now and then to listen; from outside came the noises of the yard; but he made out no sound within the car. If it had been occupied as on the days previous, he must have heard some one coming to the washroom at its end. Was he alone in the car now, or had the customary moving about taken place before he awoke?

Finally, to free himself from his nervous listening for sounds which never came, he picked up the paper again. He read:

"The news of Mr. Santoine's visit of a week on the Coast, if not known already in great financial circles, is likely to prove interesting there. For years he has been the chief agent in keeping peace among some of the great conflicting interests, and more than once he has advised the declaring of financial war when war seemed to him the correct solution. Thus, five years ago, when the violent death of Matthew Latron threatened to precipitate trouble among western capitalists, Santoine kept order in what might very well become financial chaos. If his recent visit to the Pacific coast was not purely for personal reasons but was also to adjust antagonisms such as charged by Gabriel Warden before his death, the loss of Santoine at this time may precipitate troubles which, living, his advice and information might have been able to prevent."

Having read and reread this long paragraph, Eaton thrust the sheet out the window. As he sat thinking, with lips tight closed, he heard for the first time that morning footsteps at his end of the car. The door of his compartment was unlocked and opened, and he saw Doctor Sinclair.

"Mr. Santoine wants to speak to you," the surgeon announced quietly. "This startling negation of all he imagined, unvaried, Eaton. He started up, then sank back for better composure.

"Mr. Santoine is here, then?"

"Here? Of course he's here?"

"And he's conscious?"

"He has been conscious for the better part of two days. Didn't they tell you?"

Eaton looked toward the window, breathing hard. "I heard the news-boys—"

Sinclair shrugged. "The papers print what they can get and in the way which seems most effective to them," was his only comment.

The surgeon led Eaton to the door of the drawing room, showed him in and left him.

Harriet Santoine was sitting on the little lounge opposite the berth where her father lay. She was watching the face of her father, and as Eaton stood in the door, he saw her lean



Harriet Santoine Was Sitting on the Little Lounge Opposite the Berth Where Her Father Lay.

forward and gently touch her father's hand; then she turned and saw Eaton.

"Here is Mr. Eaton, Father," she said.

"Sit down," Santoine directed. The blind man was very weak and must stay quite still; and he recognized it; but he knew too that his strength was more than equal to the task of recovery, and he showed that he knew it. His mind and will were, obviously, at their full activity, and he had fully his sense of hearing.

Harriet's lips trembled as she turned to Eaton; but she did not speak directly to him yet; it was Basil Santoine who suddenly inquired: "What is it they call you?"

"My name is Philip D. Eaton," Eaton realized as soon as he had spoken that both question and answer had been unnecessary, and Santoine had asked only to hear Eaton's voice.

The blind man was silent for a moment, as he seemed to consider the voice and try again vainly to place it in his memories. Then he spoke to his daughter.

"Describe him, Harriet."

Harriet paled and flushed.

"About thirty," she said, "—under rather than over that. Six feet or a little more in height. Slender, but muscular and athletic. Skin and eyes clear and with a look of health. Complexion naturally rather fair, but darkened by being outdoors a good deal. Hair dark brown, straight and parted at the side. Smooth shaven. Eyes blue-gray, with straight lashes. Eyebrows straight and dark. Forehead smooth, broad and intelligent. Nose straight and neither short nor long; nostrils delicate. Mouth straight, with lips neither thin nor full. Chin neither square nor pointed, and without a cleft. Face and head, in general, of oval Anglo-American type."

"Go on," said Santoine.

Harriet was breathing quite—"Hands well shaped, strong but without sign of manual labor; nails cared for but not polished. Gray business suit, new. Soft-bosomed shirt of plain design with soft cuffs. Medium-height turn-down white linen collar. Four-in-hand tie, tied by himself. Black shoes. No jewelry except watch-chain."

"In general?" Santoine suggested.

"In general, apparently well-educated, well-bred, intelligent young American. Expression frank. Manner self-controlled and reserved. Seems sometimes younger than he must be, sometimes older. Something has happened at some time which has had a great effect and can't be forgotten."

While she spoke, the blood, rising with her embarrassment, had dyed Harriet's face; suddenly now she looked away from him and out the window.

"He would be called, I judge, a rather likable-looking man?" Santoine said tentatively; his question plainly was only meant to lead up to something else, Santoine had judged in this particular already.

"Mr. Eaton"—Santoine addressed him suddenly—"I understand that you have admitted that you were at the house of Gabriel Warden the evening he was killed while in his car. Is that so?"

"Yes," said Eaton.

"You are the man, then, of whom Gabriel Warden spoke to his wife?"

"I believe so."

"You believe so?"

"I mean," Eaton explained quietly, "that I came by appointment to call on Mr. Warden that night. I believe that it must have been to me that Mr. Warden referred in the conversation with his wife which has since been quoted in the newspapers."

(Continued Next Week.)

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