

NO. 3. THE MYSTERIOUS HOUSE NEXT DOOR

True Lies at the SECRET MARKET By an Investigative

EDITED BY WM. J. BACON
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Editor's Note:—On Government Orders is a series of interesting stories that are incidents in the life of a formerly well-known but now forgotten man. Now that he is long and faithful service. Now that he is a hero, he is a hero. Now that he is a hero, he is a hero. Now that he is a hero, he is a hero.

"IT HAS often been my fortune to start out on some insignificant matter and stumble into something big and important by merely keeping my eyes open and my wits about me," remarked Captain Dickson as we warmed our hands before the cheerful fire in his snug den and listened to the glowing story.

"The adventure I am now going to relate happened in one of the larger Southern cities. I had been sent down there on some minor matter, the real nature of which is immaterial. It was a case that required time and secrecy. For that reason, I did not carry with me a hotel, but I carried a quiet boarding-house on a side street, where I secured a room and excellent table board at a figure surprisingly reasonable."

"There were three young men residing in the house. The family consisted of a gentleman and his wife. My main object in coming to the city was to have found a place more completely suited to my necessities. I pretended that I represented a Northern wood-working concern and that I was in the South to buy timber lands. This character was easily borne out, as I was often out of the city, and at such times I gave it out that I was looking over tracts of timber."

"The city, like many of those in the South, possessed a large negro population, and it was a strange thing to me when I first went there to see negro shanties sprinkled along the best residence streets wherever there was a low place or a bayou. The negroes were all through the downtown districts. The place where I boarded was a small brick house, one of a block, all of the same design, and built by the same town as a frame building that was occupied by a negro family. I learned that this was a white house, built by the owner of the adjoining lot as a matter of convenience to the white family block, against whom he cherished an old grudge."

"Some days after my arrival, the lady with whom I boarded announced one evening, when we came in for supper, that the negro family was moving out of the cottage and that she believed it was going to be torn down. In the next morning I went to town I noticed workmen repairing the shanty."

"I gave the matter no further thought for several days. One night I noticed smoke rising from the chimney of the little cottage and on closer inspection I saw the smoke coming from the fine lace curtains and there was a look of excitement upon the front door. That night I casually asked my landlady about her new neighbors. She seemed surprised and told me she did not know any one had moved into the house. Women are naturally curious, and the next night at supper she said she had watched the people next door must have moved in during the night; that none of the neighbors had seen their furniture delivered and, although she had watched the door all day, she hadn't seen a soul about it and no sign of life except the smoke she had noticed coming from the chimney."

"At breakfast table the next morning, at the table, who had been out in the night before, said he had seen a private carriage driven by two handsome boys, and with a driver in the front seat, stop before the door of the humble little cottage. He had seen some distance away and the vehicle had paused but a moment, just long enough to allow two persons to

alight. It had driven away instantly. This had happened some time after 1 o'clock.

"My landlady was especially interested in the mysterious house, often talked of them, and speculated on who might live there and why they should preserve such secrecy about their movements. She offered many wild suggestions in solution of the mystery, but none of them seemed to fill the bill, and there seemed to be no way to tell whether the one or the other or none of them was right. The thing finally got on my nerves, and I never passed the cottage without looking at it and wishing I might be allowed to see through its walls."

"I was called out of town about this time, and did not think of the cottage again until my return. My train arrived after midnight, and I caught an evening uptown, which put me off within two blocks of my boarding-house. The streets were deserted and the echo of my foot-fall rang loud and clear in the still streets. Some distance ahead I noticed a man slouching along, looking about with that nervous, stealthy air of a man who fears he is being followed. This attracted my attention, and I walked slowly so I would not overtake him. I wanted to see where he was going, and for some reason he thought of the mysterious house pointed to my mind. We were on the opposite side of the street from the house, but at the nearest corner he crossed, and I had a fairly good view of his face under the street lamp. He was evidently a foreigner, but I could not make out the nationality. He wore a heavy brown beard and dark goggles. For a moment he stopped in the shadow of a building and watched him. After looking carefully in every direction he stepped up on the porch and the door opened to admit him. He had knocked. This looked interesting, and I decided to watch the house for a while and see if any others went in."

"There was a vacant house directly across the street, and I slipped into the yard and took a position in the heavy shadow cast by the building. In a few minutes the door of the cottage was opened, and a man and a woman came out and made off down the street. The driver then went into the house through a back door. "At the appointed time, I was stumped than the lady and gentleman came out and entered it. Immediately it drove away, the messenger boy following it at a distance on his wheel. In a few minutes one of the men came out and made off down the street. He was followed by the suspicious-looking foreigner. After he had gone a block or so, the man with the limp stepped out and hobbled off. I let him get a good start and went after him. He had left his packages in the house. For several blocks I followed him, until he entered a small family hotel on a side street. After he had disappeared in the elevator I went in the office and engaged the clerk in conversation while I made a pretense of looking up an address in the city directory. From the clerk I learned that the man of the limp was named Howard Brown. He didn't know anything else about him except that he was registered in Boston. I met the messenger boy. He had done his work well. He gave me the street address where the carriage stopped, saying the man and woman had entered the house with a pass key, and the carriage had been put up in the barn at the rear. The driver then went into the house through a back door. "In the afternoon I looked up the house. It was a pretentious, stone-venered residence on a fashionable street. I learned that its occupants were foreigners, presumably French. Jules Lefevre was the man's name. He represented himself as a cotton buyer for an export firm in Paris, but inquiry among the cottonmen showed he didn't buy much cotton. He maintained an office uptown, but was rarely

two more if he executed the commission without attracting the attention of the persons in the carriage or of the driver. "The carriage had driven away as soon as the occupants had alighted, and I felt sure it would return. I waited and waited, but it did not come. The waiting was beginning to tell on me and I was suffering for a change of air. I was thinking of going to my room when I heard the carriage returning. "About the same time a messenger boy came skimming noiselessly down the street, and he called him into the shadow of the building, and asked him if he did not want to make a couple of dollars. He told him to hide himself and follow the carriage when it drove away, reporting back to me at an appointed place where it went. I gave him a dollar in advance and promised him

place and excommunicated its advocates; and the Copernicans routed the Catholics and compelled them to accept this theory as science. The Korshans declare that it is not science at all, but a big story or clumsy device, that it has never been proven and cannot be, and that the most eminent astronomers admit that they have discovered the true form and function of the earth, that it is a great hollow cell, with the atmosphere, physical heavens and heavenly bodies in the inside, and that we, the people, live on the inside, on the solid shell that incloses it like an egg shell. This hollow instrument of the earth and its eternal and immovable. "The whole universe is within the shell and constitutes a great cosmic battery. The sun, the planets, the stars, the forces that perpetuate themselves. There are three atmospheres. This lower atmosphere extends about 100 miles up, and within and above that a more ethereal atmosphere encircling the central sun. "The central sun is not visible through the atmosphere. One hemisphere of it is dark, the other light. One-half of the surface of the earth is thus always in darkness, and the other half is always in light. The light of the bright side is projected and localized on the surface of the hydrogen atmosphere, then refocused on the surface of the lower atmosphere, and the last focalization is the visible sun, moving round the heavens like a great searchlight. "The whole works, sun, moon and stars, are in the inside, like the works of a watch and answer the same purpose of measuring time, days, months, years, dispensations and greater cycles of eternal procession. I cannot attempt to explain

living Without Phones No Longer an Easy Matter in These Days of Rush. Now that Paris has been deprived of a fire of its telephone service, the city is heartily to be congratulated on the fact that its services were extremely important. Had it been better the present situation of the Parisians would be more desperate than it is, for they would have come to depend upon the telephone much more than any of them except their humorous paragraphs and cartoons, have ever been able to do—would have come to depend upon it almost every relation of public and private life—as have the New Yorkers, for instance, and in a hardy American city, town and village, and of a not very small minority of American farms. Even in Paris, however, the burning of the great central station has so interfered with the conduct of business



QUICK AS A THOUGHT BOTH HIS REVOLVERS FLASHED.

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in it. His bookkeeper, a young man of dark complexion, whom I instantly recognized as the coachman, never seemed to have anything to do but to attend to the books and to mail the work mailed. These matters made me decide to sift the mystery of the little cottage to the bottom and see if I wouldn't find something of consequence in the ashes. "For three nights I shadowed the house without seeing any one enter or leave it, although the continuous outpouring of smoke from the chimney showed that some one was always at home. The fourth night I again saw Lefevre and his wife and the three men I had observed on the former occasion enter the house. They arrived a little after 1 o'clock. "I telephoned for my friend, the messenger boy, and when the house party broke up and the mysterious members began to slink away in the night I followed the suspicious-looking foreigner,

and got the messenger boy on the trail of the gentleman in the big overcoat. "My man gave me a long chase. He traversed many streets, cutting from side to side and back again and acting in every way like a criminal who seemed to fear some being followed. He required all my skill in shadowing to prevent him from discovering I was watching him. On one occasion he almost caught me. He turned a corner and I stepped up to allow him to get some distance away. I could hear the ring of his footsteps for a while, and then all noise ceased. He had either stopped or entered a building. I slipped into an alleyway, the corner of which he should see my head. Something prompted me that he was coming back, and I slipped into an alleyway between two buildings. It was well I had done so, for I had scarcely concealed myself when the man came sneaking around the corner like a vagrant cat, his main object being to get into the most in arm's length of me and dodged into a stairway that entered the building at the side of which I was. At that moment he did not leave the building by some back stairway, I went to the appointed place to receive the messenger boy's report. His main business was to get into the best hotels of the city and had retired. He was registered under the name of James Whitcomb, New York City. "I was the night for the user characters out something about the mysterious little cottage and the invisible persons who lived in it. "That afternoon I looked over the surroundings of the cottage both from the street and from the side window of my boarding house. The stumpy was raised on brick piers and the space between them was enclosed by trellis-work. It abutted directly on the walk beside my boarding house, the cottage serving as the dividing fence for my neighbor's garden. "About midnight I removed a section of the trellis-work and crawled under the cottage, armed with a sharp chisel. It was the matter of a few minutes to cut a tiny hole through the floor, under the back room, just large enough to determine the rooming in the matter of which depended the success of my plan. Of this I was reasonably certain, for the house appeared to be well furnished. My surmise was correct, and I enlarged the hole sufficiently to allow me to hear all that transpired in the room. I could hear each of the three men as they arrived, but beyond a cursory greeting they did not speak. They appeared to be waiting for someone. I surmised that it was Lefevre. He must be the leader. "When the carriage arrived I fairly held my breath, for I felt intuitively that I would now learn the secret of the little house and of its visitors and occupants. 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