

THE HUMANS PHINK

By Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RE. WATSON

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE
Simon Judd, amateur detective and William Dart, an undertaker, visit John Drane, an eccentric man of wealth, at the Drane place. Suddenly John Drane is murdered, and Dr. Blessington, after examining the body, makes the astounding revelation to Amy Drane that her "uncle" is a woman and not a man.

All the servants in the household are sickly, and it is revealed that John Drane never discharged a servant for ill health. Dick Brennan, detective, arrives at the house and makes thorough investigations. Simon Judd tells him the story of the actual John Drane with whom he (Judd) was acquainted in Riverbank. Judd proposes to Brennan that he "go partners" with Brennan in the solution of the crime. Brennan accepts, then Judd declares that Amy is not John Drane's niece or any relative of Drane. Mrs. Vincent, housekeeper, tells Brennan that Drane picked up a woman from among the chronic patients at the hospital. Dr. Blessington is asked if he had ever noticed any special change in Drane.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
"Change?" the doctor queried.
"As if, up to some time, he was the real John Drane and from then on was this woman playing she was him," explained Simon Judd.
"Why, since it is brought to my attention with this mystery in mind," Dr. Blessington said, "there was a time when I noticed a change in John Drane, a shocking change as I thought it. The time is pretty well fixed in my mind, too. As a matter of fact there have been two very distinct changes in this John Drane. One was when he returned from California; I hardly knew him. The other—the most shocking one—was some five months later. As a physician, coming to the house frequently, I noticed it particularly. Just before he went to California this John Drane—man or woman—was decidedly run down in health; in bad shape, I thought, although I was not asked to advise him. Then he went to California and when he returned he was like, as we say, another man. He was brisker, more cheerful, and he had put on quite a little flesh for such a thin man. He walked better and stood better. At that time his hair was dark, but he probably used a dye. The man who went to California probably not have been the woman who returned. On the other hand the change may have been wrought by rest and the warm climate."
"And the other time, five months later," said Brennan.
"A more striking change," the physician said. "From the time Drane returned from California looking so well he began to run down again. I did make so bold as to speak to him about it and he said he knew he must do something; he said he thought he would go south to Hot Springs, and take a long rest. A week later he went and he was gone three months. He came back with his hair absolutely gray, as it is now, his face emaciated, his body nothing but bones. It was a shocking change. Except for one thing I might be willing to swear that, in my opinion, the person who came back from Hot Springs was not the man who went there. That

thing is a scar on this woman's abdomen—the scar of an appendicitis operation. My opinion now is that she probably went there for the operation—if that was indeed where she went—in order that her sex might not be discovered by any one who knew her."
"That's a possibility," Brennan admitted.
"She could have changed into women's clothes at some stop-over on route," the doctor said, "changing back into male garments on her return. If that is the answer she must have had a bad time of the operation to wear down so tremendously. But it is possible that the man who left here that time was not the woman-man who returned here a little later."
Brennan said nothing for a full minute.
"I'm afraid I don't see much in that idea, doctor," he said finally. "There's too much of the impossible in it. The person who returned from Hot Springs—if that was where the person went—was certainly very much like the person who left here as John Drane, is it not so? Enough so that you were not particularly suspicious? Then how could a substitution have been made? Who was this woman who was so much like John Drane that she could come back here and take his place in the house and at his office in Wall Street, going on with his speculations without creating comment? The thing is rather absurd. Such a woman must have planned taking John Drane's place for years; she must have learned all about his business to the minutest details, and all about his home affairs here. She must have planned to murder him or make away with him somehow. It is too improbable, doctor."
"You asked me, you know," said Dr. Blessington, a little offended.
"And your answer is perfectly good," said Brennan. "Now let me ask you another: did you ever notice anything to make you think this woman was insane? I mean the victim of a mania. What do you think of her idea of having sick servants and no others? What about her friendship with this undertaker?"
Dr. Blessington turned these questions in his mind before he answered.
"You understand that I am not an alienist," he said then, choosing his words with some care. "I am only what is called a general practitioner. As one of the hospital staff I have sometimes recommended to Drane, at his request, chronic patients still able to do easy work, and it never occurred to me that there was insanity in his desire to aid the unfortunates. To tell you the truth, Brennan, I thought it was fine of him to give these people jobs in his house. Even when they fell ill he saw that they had the best attention, medical and otherwise. When they died—"
"A good many did die, did they?" asked Brennan, and Dr. Blessington

colored.
"You will remember that they were mostly people doomed to die," he said stily. "They had, many of them—most of them—incurable diseases."
"But they did die," Brennan insisted. "What I mean is this, doctor: this woman known as John Drane had great wealth, if she wanted to help these incurables she could have sent them to sanitariums and she could never have missed the money. She seems to have liked to have the sickly, the dying, and the undertaker clustered about her. I'd call that morbid, wouldn't you?"
"Yes, I might call it morbid," Dr. Blessington admitted. "I wouldn't say it meant she was crazy."
"Well, I don't know that it makes much difference whether she was crazy or not; she has been murdered just the same, sane or insane," Brennan said. "I'm just trying to get a clear picture of her in my mind. That's all now, doctor; I can get in touch with you if anything else turns up."
The doctor opened the door leading into the hall, but Simon Judd held him with a question.
"Say, doc," he said, "how long have you known this John Drane, anyway?"
Dr. Blessington pulled at his chin, trying to place an exact date.
"He came here, I believe in 1892," he said. "It may have been '92 or '94. I met him first that same year when I called on him for a gift to our hospital. I know that I hoped he might make use of my services if he needed a physician, but I was not called in until two years later—say in 1895. I've been the family physician since then."
"And along back there in '93 and '95 he was just about the same fellow he looks as he lies up there on the bed?" Simon Judd asked.
"Yes," said the doctor slowly. "Yes, increasing age and illness taken into consideration."
"You don't mean to say?" Simon Judd exclaimed. "Well, black my cats! And I dare say it was along about when he called you in that he began to gather these sickly hired help around him, huh?"
"Yes, I think that is so," Dr. Blessington said. "That is so."
"And when, doc," Simon Judd asked cheerfully, "was the time when he murdered the first of these sickly hired hands of his?"
(Continued Next Week)

Hints for the Home

by Nancy Hart

With the return of indoor life in fall comes the desire to add something new to home-furnishings. And in choosing them it is well to remember that individual pieces are always in better taste than "sets" of furniture—whether for the living room, dining room or bed room. In some of the most charming interiors we find no attempt is made to "match" things. There is merely a fine sense of harmony between the pieces which, while they differ from each other in details of design and color, are in sufficient sympathy to make them live together happily. These are the rooms that remain interesting year after year because they never bore us with too much sameness.

- They'll Like This Meatless Meal**
- Cream of cauliflower soup
 - CROUTONS
 - Baked eggs with cheese
 - Grilled tomatoes
 - Spanish bean salad
 - Steamed blueberry pudding
 - Non-stimulating drink
- Baked Apples De Luxe**
- Core six nice apples but do not pare them. Fill centers with sugar, cinnamon and small bits of butter. Add a few tablespoons of water and bake until tender. Before serving, whip raspberry flavored gelatin to a froth, add a few chopped green cherries and nuts and fill the cavities of the apples, piling the gelatin high.
- An Unusual Meat Salad**
- To 1 1/2 cups of diced cold roast veal or pork add several stalks of crisp celery, diced, an apple peeled and chopped fine, and 1/2 cup of nut meats. Mix with mayonnaise and serve on crisp lettuce.
- Dainty Desserts for Box Lunches**
- Children soon tire of cake and

fruit for the school lunch dessert. If you keep on hand a supply of paper cartons such as drug stores use to deliver ice cream, you can safely pack a number of favorites, such as rice pudding, blanc mange, fruited gelatins or tapioca, Spanish or Bavarian cream. These are all exceedingly wholesome, and seem a delicious treat to the little folks.

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