

DEPUTY of the DEVIL

By Ben Ames Williams

Copyright, Ben Ames Williams.

WNU Service.

SYNOPSIS

Dr. Greeding, a wealthy and talented middle aged surgeon, is possessed of seemingly supernatural powers. He is able to anticipate what people say before they utter a word; occasionally he can wish for something extraordinary to happen and have the wish fulfilled. Greeding meets Ira Jerrell, a wealthy business friend of his own age, who tells him he loves his daughter Nancy and would like to marry her. Dr. Greeding is pleased and tells Jerrell he has a clear field. Nancy, however, is in love with Dan Carlisle, an assistant professor at the University who has little means.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"It was terrible," she assured him, smiling through tears. "I thought I'd die! Nothing ever did hurt so. Please be sorry for me."

"Sorry? Honey, I'd—" He hesitated, and his eyes clouded, and he released her. He said awkwardly: "I'll get your coat. You'll be chilled."

"I'll never be cold again, darling," she vowed.

But he let her while he fetched her coat and his sweater. She looked ruefully at the red blaze on her knee.

"That's going to be black and blue," she told him, when he returned.

"And red, and orange, and yellow," he predicted. You let your father look at it. It might need something."

"I think it's grand," she said, smiling at him as he knelt beside her, drawing him near. "I hope it stays that way for days and days."

And a moment later she said: "If I'd known it took that to make you—do this, I'd have let a ball hit me long ago!"

He frowned miserably. "Nancy, I shouldn't have—kissed you."

"Why not?" she demanded. "I liked it. I think you should do it again."

He protested: "You know darned well—I can't, darling."

"Why can't you?" she challenged.

"It's just a matter of common sense," he urged. "You know what your father and mother—"

"Is it them you want to marry?" she demanded hotly. "Dan, you make me tired!"

"I know," he said. "And I'm sorry. But—my salary is less than your dress-allowance. And it will never be much larger. I'll be a professor, eventually, of course; but you know what that means. It might be years before we could even manage to keep a cook!"

"Will you please get it through your thick head," she insisted, "that I want to marry you. Do you think I'm afraid of working, of being poor, or anything, as long as I have you?"

"It isn't what you think, sweet," he said. "It's your mother and father!"

She said after a moment, seriously: "Mother's all right. I can count on her. She knows you, your people—knows how fine you are. But father might be unreasonable." Her brow furrowed. "I've never felt that I—know father very well," she confessed. "He's given me everything, done everything for me; and I know he's proud of me. But I always have a feeling it's a sort of impersonal, possessive pride. Sometimes I'm—afraid of him!"

"Nonsense," he urged. "He's a mighty able man, and a fine man. I don't blame him; but Nancy, from his point of view, you rate some one a lot better than me!"

She drew the coat more snugly around her shoulders. "He sha'n't interfere," she said, a faint desperation in her tones; and suddenly she clung to him. "Dan, Dan, I want you. I want you."

He held her close and tenderly; and when he spoke, his head was high. "All right, Nancy," he said simply. "I don't know how we'll manage it, but what you want is still it's going to be. We'll work it out, somehow. I'll see your father."

When, an hour or so later, Doctor Greeding came home, he alighted from the car at the side door, and came into the house while Thomas took the car to the garage. But in the small side hall, he paused, attentive, and stood for a moment motionless, almost as though he were listening; but there was nothing to hear. Yet his posture suggested that he heard something, or sensed something.

And this was in fact the case. After an instant he saw the rackets and balls where Dan had laid them down; and he crossed and picked up a ball, and then a racket, and held them in his hands. He frowned faintly, and looked right and left. The question in his mind was answered now, and the answer was unwelcome.

He put down the tennis gear and ascended the stairs. Nancy's room

was opposite the head of the stairs; he hesitated, then knocked on her door. She called sleepily:

"Who is it?"

"Mother home, Nancy?" he asked.

"I don't think so. I don't know. I've been asleep."

"All afternoon?" he protested, without opening the door. "On a fine day like this?"

After a moment she replied. "No," she said. "I played tennis for a while."

"Who with?" he asked, carefully casual.

Again it was an instant before her answer came. "Judith Plank came over," she replied at last.

At that word, the man's brows drew together, and a surge of unaccustomed anger swept him; but without comment, he went on toward his own room. He closed the door behind him and stood alone there, his head bent, his thoughts racing. For he knew that Nancy had lied; and that his daughter should lie to him, since it implied a criticism of himself, woke in the man a fretful rage.

It was a moment before he perceived in her mendacity the further implication that she was fond of Dan Carlisle; and Doctor Greeding's eyes flickered at the thought, as heat lightning on a sultry day flickers along distant hills.

He saw that the door into Mrs. Greeding's dressing-room was open, and crossed to the door and spoke her name; but she was not there.

He stood in the doorway, looking around this room furnished in a fashion so distasteful to him. The black-and-white chairs, the gaudy

draperies, that hideous, ridiculous malformed chunk of marble, shapeless, meaningless. All the anger aroused in him by the knowledge that Nancy had lied, and what her lie implied, concentrated suddenly upon this ugly marble.

He crossed and picked it up in his hands, turning it over and over, hating it. He wished to break it into bits, smash it to dust. He abhorred this harmless chunk of marble with an unreasoning venom. It was the scapegoat upon which he poured out his wrath.

And while he stood thus, holding the marble in his hand, a strange thing occurred: Suddenly the statuette was no longer in his grasp. Rather, it was snatched away from him as though by an invisible force. The thing left his hands, and for an instant, while time stood still, it seemed to waver in the air.

Then it fell to the floor. The fall was no more than a few feet; yet the solid marble, even before that impact, appeared to burst apart in midair. It lay in a litter of shards and dusty fragments.

Doctor Greeding's eyes distended with an incredulous astonishment, with something like dismay. He stood for a long time looking down at this rubbish. Then he wiped his brow and went softly back into his own room.

CHAPTER II

Doctor Greeding closed the door behind him, as uneasy as a guilty small boy. Mrs. Greeding, he knew, treasured that absurd statuette; she would be when she saw it broken, querulous and angry. But this in itself was not enough to account for the inward disturbance which shook him.

It was incredible that a fall of three or four feet upon a hardwood floor should have shattered that solid chunk of marble into a hundred pieces; yet it had! Another man would have dismissed the incident as casual mischance; but Doctor Greeding even in this moment sus-

pected that something within himself, something violent and explosive, had struck the statuette and shivered it to dust. He rejected the thought with all the power of his logical and scientific mind; yet it persisted.

And he had, too, that sensation common to every man: the certainty that somewhere, somehow, this had happened to him before. He was even able presently to identify this memory. As a boy on the farm he had been whipped one day, and sent to his room to reflect upon his sins. There a lamp, at which he was staring unseeingly through a mist of angry tears, somehow toppled off the table beside him and fell and was broken. Accused, he denied—in honest sincerity—that he had touched either table or lamp, and was whipped again for his denial. His father, between strokes of the strap, said vehemently:

"One thing I can't stand is a lying young one, Ned! I'll take it out of you!"

And Doctor Greeding remembered that hour now. That day, sent to his room, he had been in a brooding fury at the thrashing he had just received. This day likewise he was filled with a tempestuous rage. After his conversation with Ira Jerrell, the discovery that Nancy had been playing tennis with Dan Carlisle was enough in itself to disturb him. Dan, from Doctor Greeding's point of view, was a penniless instructor, with no prospects worth considering—and no discoverable ambition likely to lead to financial success. Certainly he was not equipped to rival Ira Jerrell.

Yet he was young, and even Doctor Greeding could perceive a certain charm in him. So, finding that Dan and Nancy had been this day together, the man was quick to a jealous alarm. When Nancy lied to him, his uneasiness became anger—which, translated and focused upon a material object, had shattered solid marble into dust!

Doctor Greeding contemplated these facts in silence, conscious of strange stirrings in himself. Presently he stirred the bell. Ruth, the second maid, answered. She was a thin, pale, black-haired woman, who habitually wore an expression of pained disapproval. She and Margaret, the fat cook, had served Doctor and Mrs. Greeding loyally for many years.

"Fetch me a cocktail," Doctor Greeding directed.

"A cocktail?" Ruth echoed, in protesting astonishment; for Doctor Greeding was an abstemious man, not given to drinking alone.

"Certainly," he said crisply. Then with a cautious feeling that some explanation was necessary: "I'm tired. I'll lie down awhile. Are we dining at home?"

"No sir," she told him. "At the Jordans." And she disappeared.

He had removed his outer garments and put on a dressing-gown before she returned with the shaker and a glass upon a tray. She set them grudgingly on his table and withdrew; and he drank two or three cocktails, quickly, standing at the window where he might watch for Mrs. Greeding's return. There was a deep impatience in him; and when his wife's open roadster presently turned in from the street, he swung about toward her dressing-room, waiting for her to come upstairs.

He could hear her in the hall below giving some instruction to Ruth; and he resented the delay. Then he heard her come up the stairs, heard her open the door of her dressing-room, next his own; and then her instant cry of consternation, and then her call:

"Ruth! Ruth!"

The maid came hurriedly up the stairs, and Mrs. Greeding demanded: "What happened to my statuette, Ruth? Look at it!"

The Doctor stood by the closed door between their rooms, listening.

"I don't know, Mrs. Greeding," Ruth indignantly protested. "I didn't know anything about it. I haven't been in the room since just after you left."

"Who's been here?" Mrs. Greeding demanded. "Who's been upstairs? It couldn't just fall; and even if it did, it wouldn't break all to bits like that! That statuette was valuable, Ruth. If you did it, you might as well tell the truth."

"I didn't, Mrs. Greeding," the woman insisted stiffly.

And Mrs. Greeding said apologetically: "Of course not. I didn't mean to seem to doubt you. But who else has been upstairs?"

"Only Miss Greeding, and the Doctor," Ruth returned.

Then Doctor Greeding opened the door between the two rooms. "Hello, Myra," he said casually. "What's the trouble?"

Mrs. Greeding turned toward him. She was a large, fair woman, with hair a little too insistently yellow.

"Ned!" she cried. "Some one's

broken my statuette! See!"

"Probably fell off the stand," he suggested.

"Nonsense!" she cried indignantly. "A fall might have cracked it; but it's just ground to bits. Look!"

"It must have been an accident, Myra," he urged impatiently. "Never mind that now. You can get another. I want to talk to you!"

He looked toward Ruth, and the woman grimly disappeared.

"Another?" Mrs. Greeding cried indignantly. "Another indeed! Ned, don't you realize that works of art don't come by the dozen! That statuette was unique! It was one of Payson's things, and he's practically my discoverer, and that would have been priceless when he became known. Another! Ned, sometimes you're the most irritating man!"

Doctor Greeding fought to keep his voice under control. The affair of the statuette was disquieting enough, certainly; but there were other matters better worth discussing. He managed a smile.

"I'm sorry, Myra. Perhaps if you subsidize Payson sufficiently, he'll do you a copy. I expect he'll be glad of the commission."

"But he can't, Ned! Works of art—"

Doctor Greeding said sharply: "Tosh, Myra! Drop it, can't you?"

"But it looks as though some one had just pounded it and pounded it," she urged, in an increasing mystification. "It couldn't possibly break all up that way just by falling."

He said irascibly: "Will you be still! Forget the fool thing. It isn't worth all this talk, surely!"

She stared at him shrewdly.

"Ned, you've been drinking!" she cried. "I can always tell. Your eyes are red. Whatever has happened to upset you? It isn't like you to come home and get drunk and—"

He cried in a deep exasperation: "Stop it, Myra!"

She was, suddenly, pale. "Why, of course, Ned," she said placatingly. "I didn't mean—"

She seemed puzzled, incredulous. She came to him, kissed him. "I'm sorry, Ned. I didn't mean to bother you. Had a hard day?"

"No," he barked.

"Then you're worrying about one of your patients?"

He shook his head, patted her shoulder roughly. "Not at all," he insisted. "I'm a little tired, nothing more." He released her, and she turned back to the dressing-table.

"We must dress now," she said. "We're dining at the Jordans, you know."

"Ruth told me," he assented.

She began to undress. "You'd better hurry, or you'll be late," she said.

He hesitated, but the time was in fact short; and in such matters he was punctilious. He went to his own room, to the shower. But presently, fitting his studs, he came to the door between their rooms again, and saw that she was brushing her hair; he asked in a tone carefully casual:

"Nancy going with us?"

"No," Mrs. Greeding told him. "She's going somewhere with Judith."

His collar pinched his neck as he fumbled with the button; he made a wry face. "Not alone, surely," he protested. His tone was light, amused. "I don't suppose two girls as pretty as Nancy and Judith are likely to go anywhere alone."

"I don't know," she admitted. "I didn't ask! Ford Minick, maybe, or Ethan, or Pete Master, or some of that crowd."

"Nancy doesn't seem particularly interested in any special young man," he remarked. "Or at least, if she is, she conceals the fact from the paternal eye."

"Probably there will be, by and by," his wife agreed. "Nancy'll tell us when she's ready."

The Doctor was conscious of a reservation in her words.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Worn Teeth in Predmost Skulls Puzzle to Scientists Who Welcome Suggestions

What the ancient men of Predmost, in Moravia, carried in their mouths to wear down their teeth is puzzling European archeologists. As far back as 1871 fossil bones were found at this little hill not far from the modern university city of Brno. Fifty years ago a Moravian schoolmaster named K. J. Maska discovered bones of 20 or more human beings apparently buried in a common grave and enough like each other to make experts regard them all as members of the same family group.

Bones of the extinct elephant called the mammoth disclose the Predmost dwellers as hunters of this beast. Skillfully carved objects of bone and other artistic remains, as well as the prevailing large size of the Predmost skulls, prove the people to have been one branch of the famous Cro-Magnon race. Recently Dr. Jirnich Matiegka, of the

University of Prague, reported a new study of all human skulls found at the Predmost site.

Like the skulls of all primitive people, these show much wear of the teeth, usually blamed on sand and grit in food. Among the Predmost adults, however, the right upper jaw shows a special kind of molar tooth. Tobacco was unknown in Predmost days so one cannot imagine this wear caused by stems of pipes, recently stated the Baltimore Sun. A habit of carrying pebbles in the mouth has been suggested but there seems no special reason for this.

The climate was not dry enough to cause much thirst. Perhaps bladders of some sort were used but no remains of such pipes have been found. Dr. Matiegka and other Czechoslovakian archeologists will welcome any reasonable suggestion.

"How about Dan Carlisle?" he asked bluntly.

"Oh, Dan hasn't the money to play with their crowd," she said, after a moment. "Of course, Nancy knows him."

"I've seen him here once or twice," he assented scornfully. "He seems a pleasant youngster; but I can't imagine any man worth his salt deliberately taking to teaching as a profession."

"I've heard Professor Carlisle lecture," she commented. "He's a charming old man!"

"No doubt," the Doctor agreed in a dry tone; but he said then roughly, impatient of indirection: "Yet the Professor's charm does not justify Nancy's imagining herself in love with Dan!"

He saw her eyes widen, and recognized that she had known about Dan, and had wished him not to know; and his face congested with anger at the thought. She saw his countenance in the mirror, and turned pale; but she said nothing.

"You knew she was?" he said in a low voice, accusingly.

"Nancy's never spoken to me about it, Ned," she urged defensively. "I've only—guessed. I've seen no more than you. It's only that I'm perhaps a little closer to Nancy—understand her better—"

"Closer?" he ejaculated, in a rising wrath.

"She's afraid of you, I think, Ned," she confessed. "You do act, sometimes, as though you owned her, you know."

"Afraid of me?" His cheek was purple. "Why should my daughter be afraid of me? I'm no ogre!"

"No, you're not," she assented honestly. "You've been generous with Nancy, given her everything; and you're always calm, and kind. But—you've always had your own way. I've worried, sometimes, about what you might be like if—things didn't go to suit you."

There were twisting snakes of fury in the man. He tried to laugh. "Is this some sudden discovery on your part, Myra? This sinister side of my character!"

She rose and came toward him. "Ned dear, please," she said. "I'm sorry! You're upset today, different." She smiled. "I suppose all fathers are furious when they discover that their daughters are beginning to love some one else. Some other man. But you'll have to get used to it, Ned. Nancy's a woman now, you know."

She would have put her arms around him, but he rebuffed her. "Never mind that," he said sharply. "I came home this afternoon and—found that Nancy had been playing tennis with this young Carlisle. I asked her about it, and she said she had played with Judith—didn't mention him. She lied to me!"

She looked at him thoughtfully. "You're so sure of things, sometimes, Ned. Was Dan here when you came? How can you be sure?"

"What difference does that make?" he exclaimed, twitching at his tie.

She returned to her dressing-table. "None, of course," she agreed soothingly. "But for that matter, Ned, what difference does it make if Dan did play tennis with Nancy?"

"I don't object to that," he retorted. "I object to her lying to me!"

She said wisely: "That is—significant, of course. A girl's instinct to conceal, to be secretive, is one of the first—symptoms." He saw her smile wistfully, tenderly, at her own thoughts. "I've realized for some time that Nancy was thinking a good deal about Dan," she admitted.

He said flatly: "It is not going any farther. It is going to stop right here."

"But why?" she protested. "Dan's a nice boy."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

what Irvin S. Cobb thinks about:

The Social Register.

SANTA MONICA, CALIF. — Those who warm their aristocratic hands at the social register, take comfort from the latest issue of that priceless volume. It seems that, if a well-born lady weds a night club playboy with a head suitable for a handle on a dollar umbrella, she stays put.

But if she is married to a genuine gentleman, such as Gene Tunney is, or a gifted orchestra leader, such as Eddie Duchin, out she goes.

The charming granddaughter of a poor Irish immigrant qualifies as an entry, which is as it should be, in any language. But when she takes for a husband the son of a poor Jewish immigrant, whose blemish is that he's a professional songwriter—and one of the greatest song writers alive—her name is scratched off the sacred scroll.

Yet what's an old family but a family that advertises that it's old? And what is society except a lot of people who keep proclaiming that they are society until the rest of us believe them? *

Protecting Human Game.

FOR the preservation of the lessening wild fowl, the government stands pat by its ruling that ducks may no longer be lured to hunting grounds which have been baited for them and then bagged. But one shudders what would happen to Wall street if practically the same system now in vogue for garnering in the human game was ever abolished on the stock exchange.

Still, why not leave well enough alone? If there was no margin gambling available for cleaning the poor things, they'd bet their money on horse racing or the old Spanish prisoner game or something. *

Liberty League Marriages.

THE rotogravure sections reveal that they've just opened a fresh crate of du Ponts, too late to qualify for membership in the Liberty League, because the Liberty League, alas, is dead of overnourishment, but in ample time to fill up the background at the approaching marriage of the President's fine son, Franklin Delano, Jr., and a charming daughter of the royal family of Delaware.

That's one wedding where the ushers will do well to see that the families are seated in separate pews during the ceremony, because somebody might tactlessly be reminded of little things that came up during the heat of the late campaign.

Otherwise, in the customary regalia of shad-bellied coats and striped trousers, it will be difficult to distinguish a champion of the rights of the great common people from an entrenched wretch of the ruggedly individualistic group. High hats and neat spats make all men equal—and make some of them homelier-looking. *

Playing the Ponies.

RACING starts soon out in Hollywood, and the stars and starines may have to make their pictures between events at Santa Anita because they'll have absolutely no time for fiddling around studios.

To risk my modest wagers on, I'm looking for a horse named Virginia Creeper or else Trailing Arbutus. Then when I lose, as I always do, I can't say my choice wasn't appropriately named.

If I had a bet on Paul Revere's nag, Paul never would have made that famous ride of his. Somewhere between Concord and Lexington, a constable would have pinched him for blocking the highway.

I often wonder where the foot-sore plugs I get tips on really hail from. It can't be a racing stable. Maybe—yes, I'm sure that's right—they're exhausted refugees from a bide-a-wee-home. *

Future Inventions.

CELEBRATING the hundredth anniversary of the American patent system, the assembled research sharps declare that among the boons to mankind promised us in the near future by our native inventive geniuses are the following:

Clothes made out of glass (with curtains, I hope, for those of us who are more than six years old).

Whisky aged instantly by powerful sound waves. (But who has thought of suitable relief for those who also will be aged instantly by drinking said whisky?)

Rats grown as big as cows by powerful sound waves. (I can hardly wait for the happy day when we may afford a family rat the size of a Jersey cow.)

IRVIN S. COBB.

©—WNU Service.

Worse Than Termites
Lumber experts call termites a minor factor of deterioration in building materials, compared with such factors as rust, decay and other physical and chemical changes.



"Who With?" He Asked, Carefully Casual.