

SERIAL STORY

THE TERRIBLE EYE

BY EDWIN RUTT

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CHAPTER I

THE living-room in the converted barn was dark, save for an occasional electric-blue spark that crackled along a set of coils. The coils were attached to a large ominous-looking machine standing against the far wall. Only the mere outlines of this machine were visible in the gloom. And the shadowy figures of Jonah Logan and Mahoney, moving restlessly about the room, lent a sinister touch. It was as though a couple of the baser conspirators had foregathered in a chamber of horrors.

Jonah Logan stopped prowling to light a cigaret. The flare of the match revealed an open, slightly-humorous face, notable for gray eyes and a wide mouth that crinkled at the corners. The sudden illumination also revealed an ordinary movie screen designed for home use.

"You know, Mahoney," Jonah said, in a kind of awed whisper, "the possibilities of this thing are so vast, so tremendous, that sometimes it almost scares me."

"What's there to be scared of?" inquired Mahoney, an unimaginative man.

"The very thought of what I could do with it. And another thing! Who'd ever figured that I'd go down in history as a great inventor? Think of it, Mahoney. Alexander Graham Bell, Edison, Marconi and Logan. How's that for a backfield?"

"You're travelin' in fast company, Chief," Mahoney said. "I'll say so. I..." But, all at once, Jonah stopped and his whole body went rigid.

Activity had begun in the ominous-looking machine. A faint yellow light glowed behind a huge lens in the front of it. The light wavered a moment, then deepened.

"Ah," breathed Jonah. "She's beginning to cook, all right."

"Think she'll work here like she did in New York?" asked Mahoney.

"Why not? Give her a touch more juice."

Mahoney complied. The blue sparks striking off the coils increased in number and intensity. Inside the machine, light seemed to churn around. Then, suddenly, images began to appear on the movie screen.

At first they were meaningless blurs, totally unrecognizable. But Jonah Logan stepped over to the machine. He took a flashlight from his pocket and the beam picked out small dial. Jonah twisted the dial carefully.

And, presently, the indistinct blurs on the screen resolved themselves into outlines, then shapes.

THE scene was a valley. On either side of it ran a range of low hills, somewhat parallel to each other. On the far slope, there was a building of foreign and antiquated architecture. Visible, also, were a number of smaller buildings. A little forest of beech trees ringed these establishments.

"Looks like that's the farm they called Hougoumont," Jonah spoke crisply. Jonah knew something about the decisive engagements of history.

"Hugo, who?" said Mahoney mystified. Mahoney knew nothing about the decisive engagements of history.

Before Jonah could reply myriads of tiny white puffs started up from the low hills on each side of the valley. And, with startling abruptness, a great company of horsemen, light gleaming off drawn sabers, off epaulets, off the metalwork of bridles, poured down the slope in the foreground. They charged in a swift-moving mass across the uneven terrain of the valley. And from the farm, and the wood around it, arose other white puffs, like cotton balls tossed into the air by unseen children.

"Gosh," Mahoney exclaimed. "That ain't a bad pitcher, Chief. Lots of action."

"Not a bad picture?" There was annoyance in Jonah's voice. "Why, man, it's super-colossal!"

"Okay," said Mahoney. "I says it was swell."

"Yes, but I detected no sense of the magnitude and—er—sweeping consequences of this invention. And yet, Mahoney, you now enjoy an odd distinction."

"Who, me?"

"You," said Jonah solemnly. "You, Mahoney, are one of the two men alive who can see the Battle of Waterloo. Just as it was fought."

siring an interview, Mr. Channing will take the matter under advisement. How do you like that?"

"Well, why didn't you state your reasons?"

Jonah stared at him. "Do you think I'd even hint about such an invention as mine in a letter to be opened by a secretary? Well, I've tried phoning Channing. Same results. Snippery operators want to know my business and when I won't give it, they ring off. I'm fed up, Mahoney. Who does Henry L. Channing think he is?"

"Maybe," said Mahoney, "he thinks he's what the newspapers call him: the multi-millionaire camera king of America."

"Bah," Jonah said. "How long do you think he'd be the camera king if I were to put the Terrible Eye on the market?" He indicated the big machine.

"Honest, Chief, I wouldn't know."

Jonah eyed his assistant severely. "You should know. However, I have no intention of marketing it. I merely want to sell the invention to Channing. And since he won't see me in the usual way unless I let down my hair to a lot of secretaries and telephone girls, I'm bawling him in his den."

"Yeah? How do you work that?"

"By going straight to the Channing estate," said Jonah decisively. "Tomorrow. I know Channing is there on vacation because I've made inquiries. Well, we'll barge in and give him a demonstration on the working model. And when he sees what that can do, wild horses couldn't stop him from rushing over here to get a load of the real McCoy. You leave it to me."

"That," said Mahoney warmly, "is just what I'm doin'. Leavin' it to you."

Jonah Logan planned his foray into the Channing domain carefully.

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There was an impressive silence.

"Well, what do you know?" Mahoney said, at last.

Jonah, apparently satisfied, shut off the machine. "No use wasting power. It's working perfectly. But I sure wish that Henry L. Channing was here tonight."

"Look, Chief," said Mahoney. "I'm only your assistant. But darn if I can make sense out of us comin' up here to Connecticut, luggin' all our junk an' hirin' this—this shakedown." He swept a disgusted hand over the converted barn.

"I've told you," said Jonah irritably, "that we came because I can't get an interview with Henry L. Channing in New York. I've written him about 25 letters. And all I've gotten in reply are formal notes, from secretaries. I quote from one, typical of all: 'If you will state your reasons for de-

fully. Far into the night he plotted, and when he finished, he smiled happily. If Jonah Logan had learned anything in his work as an inventor, he had learned patience.

Henry L. Channing was simply another problem to be solved, scientifically, painstakingly, carefully. Jonah Logan felt sure he had reached a solution. He reckoned, however, without Cupid, who at that innocent moment in Logan's life was hard at work on a big surprise.

(To Be Continued)



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