

DONALD DONALDSON, JR.

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Being a True Record and Explanation of the Seven
Mysteries Now Associated With His Name In
the Public Mind, and of an Eighth,
Which Is the Key of the Seven

By HOWARD FIELDING

(CONTINUED.)

"All of us," she replied. "Carl and your father don't feel that they can take any vacation before the meeting, and by that time the summer will be nearly gone. But we shall be very gay here. Carl and I have been planning a lawn fete for Aug. 20, so that you and little Amy Kelvin may dance together on the green. Her father will have been nicely beaten in his nefarious schemes by that time, so that there'll be no bar to perfect harmony between the families."

"I wouldn't do it, little mother," said Donald softly.

"Why?" she asked, bending over him. She had detected the serious note in his voice. She knew that he truly meant what he said.

Donaldson and Carl were talking earnestly in what might be called the background of our little group. I was in the middle distance, and, while ostensibly occupied with what the other men were saying, I had an ear for Donald.

"I think it's going to rain on Aug. 20," said he after a pause.

"Tell the truth," she commanded, forcing him to look up into her eyes.

"You will not feel like giving a fete on that day," said Donald hurriedly. "Something is going to happen. You will be surprised and grieved; you will wish that you hadn't issued any invitations for people to come here. Now, please don't worry. Promise me that you won't. It had to happen. You won't ask me any more questions, will you? You've been such a good mother all through this crazy, dreadful summer. Wait just a little longer. Trust me and believe in me. Nobody else loves anybody in the world so much as I love you."

She bent down close to him, and I did not hear what she said, nor did I hear his reply, which was very earnestly uttered, as I could see by the expression of his face. The light from a hanging lamp struck down upon him. He looked very handsome and wonderfully like his mother. The resemblance seemed to leap out into view. It was almost as if her face had been mirrored for a moment in his. What he said must have reassured her, for she smiled and kissed him tenderly upon the forehead.

He arose presently, and I at the same time. We walked up and down together on the veranda.

"Have you been giving any thought to Mr. Kelvin's troubles?" I asked.

"I have thought what an uncharitable nerve the man had to come to you for assistance at this time," said Donald.

"It is both amusing and interesting," I replied. "Certainly I shall not refuse to help him, and I shall give him my best opinion as to the genuineness of the document if he recovers it. Will he get it?"

Donald understood perfectly that I consulted him as an oracle and that my question had no reference to ordinary human information. He twisted his hands nervously together before replying.

"Isn't Jim Bunn an expert on documents of that kind?" he asked. "Doesn't he know almost as much as you do about them?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if he knew more," said I.

"Couldn't you arrange it so that you and Mr. Bunn and I could be at Mr. Kelvin's tomorrow evening?"

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "but Cobb wouldn't talk before so many witnesses."

Donald stood still and rubbed his forehead.

"I have a curious impression about Cobb," said he. "I can't seem to see Cobb. Do you know a thin, saw-toothed man with deep wrinkles drawn from his eyes to his chin, as if his nose and mouth were inclosed in marks of parenthesis? He's got a queer, side-long gait and always carries his left shoulder ahead of him when he walks."

"I don't know such a man," said I. "and yet I seem to be reminded of somebody."

"If there were any person of that description," said Donald. "I'd say that he would bring that paper to Mr. Kelvin. We might ask Mr. Bunn tomorrow. He knows everybody within forty miles of Tunbridge."

Next morning on my way to the office I called at The Elms and repeated Donald's proposal to Kelvin, who accepted it readily. Afterward I laid the case before Bunn and mentioned Donald's sketch of the person whom he seemed to see delivering the deed.

"The devil!" cried Bunn, whose nerves were in an even worse condition than usual. "That's old Walsley himself!"

The description certainly fitted him, and yet I was not prepared to believe that he would rise from the grave in which he had lain for more than a score of years and atone for the fraud attempted in his life by restoring the document upon which it had depended.

CHAPTER XII.

MYSTERY OF THE DEAD MURDERER'S HAND
(CONTINUED.)

KELVIN had named half past 9 o'clock as the time when he would receive his erring servant. It may have been an hour earlier that Donald, Jim Bunn and I went to The Elms.

We were treated somewhat as if we had been a band of conspirators and were ushered with appropriate secrecy into a small room opening off the library. It was dimly lighted, and the curtains were closely drawn, making the place very uncomfortable on a warm summer night.

Graves Reedy was there, much to my surprise, for I supposed that he would be shadowing Cobb. The detective's manner revealed to me that strictly professional cheerfulness with which he bears adversity.

"Cobb has disappeared," said Kelvin. "Mr. Reedy has lost track of him."

"Temporarily, temporarily," responded Reedy. "We shall pick him up again."

He then went on to explain how this accident had happened. Cobb had taken up his abode in a little hotel which most of us in Tunbridge would have been glad to see the last of, and from this place in the course of the previous evening Cobb had withdrawn himself in a manner so secret as to elude the remarkably keen eyes of Mr. Graves Reedy.

The detective had promptly discovered the fact of the fellow's absence, and, being firmly convinced that the affair of the deed and the bogus heir was a plot in which Joe Harvey, the lawyer, was intimately concerned, he had gone to Harvey's house, but Cobb had not appeared there, nor had he revealed himself during the remainder of the night and the following day.

"He's gone to get the document," said Kelvin, with decision. "I think that his disappearance is a good sign."

I turned to Reedy for his opinion. "There's another way of looking at it," said he. "You must remember that

this job may not be on you, sir, Mr. Kelvin. I've explained that already," he added, turning to me. "Cobb was in jail, and he wanted to get out. So he gets into communication with this shyster lawyer, convinces him that the deed which Mr. Kelvin wants is in existence, puts up the job of the pretended Walsley heir and induces Harvey to furnish \$500 cash bail in order that Cobb may get out of jail and find the deed. You see, Harvey could get his money back any time by surrendering Cobb, so he doesn't think that he risks much. But Cobb really hasn't any document to produce. All he wanted was to get out of limbo, and, being out, he skips, leaving Harvey hung up in the air for half a thousand. This looks quite reasonable to me, and when I said that we'd pick up Cobb I didn't mean that we'd necessarily pick him up in this town."

There was a silence following this presentation of the case, and during the interval I happened to notice Jim Bunn eying Donald in a questioning way. In regard to Donald's powers Bunn had the most marked alternations of skepticism and belief. He was evidently more deeply interested than he cared to own. He was by nature greedy for the marvelous and capable of great excitement over mysteries. There had been periods when he had frequented such "mediums" as advertise in the newspapers and had sought advice upon business matters from the most absurd sources. It was ever his way to be convinced in a moment and then to change his attitude to one of general and feverish incredulity quite as unreasoning as his belief had been.

In regard to Donald, I think he was much influenced by Carl Archer, who took a frivolous view of the subject; yet Bunn would have been glad to believe the contrary. He was looking for some great revelation that would have but one interpretation, and he had welcomed this chance to go with us to Kelvin's in the hope of seeing that which would set all his doubts at rest—perhaps in the fear of seeing it, for he had a deep seated terror of the supernatural.

He felt, as I did, that Donald would not have gone to that house unless he had known that he had work to do there. Always in such cases there seemed to be a great impelling force urging Donald onward despite the reluctance of his will.

"Well," said Bunn at last, unable to restrain his impatience any longer, "what do you think of it, Don?"

"Don't ask me," responded the boy gloomily. "I don't know anything about it. If I could only think of some possible way—"

He paused and was very unwilling to proceed, though we all urged him. Finally he said:

"If I could think of any way that this document could be returned without Cobb's having anything to do with it—Cobb, Harvey or any of that crew—why, then I'd know what I was talking about."

"You are thinking of the man whom you described to me," said I.

He shook his head. "I've decided I was mistaken," he replied. "That man can't bring back the deed."

"Why?" asked Bunn in a sort of gasp.

It evidently required a great effort for Donald to answer him.

"Because," he said, as if the words were forced out of him, "the man's dead."

Bunn looked at me and nodded. "What did I tell you?" he whispered. "Walsley!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

His Inheritance.

"And now," said Professor Longhunger as he greeted Mr. Henry Peck, "what shall we make of your little boy—a lecturer? He has a sincere taste for it."

"I know he has," replied the male parent; "he inherits it from his mother."—Schoolmaster.

The Savage's Forebodings.

The savage regarded the first white man thoughtfully.

"If I try to fight him," he said, "he will exterminate me, and if I try to live in peace with him he will cheat me out of everything, and I will starve to death. What chance have I got?"

His Clerical Robes.

"Pooh! My papa wears evenin' clothes every time he goes to parties."

"That ain't anything. Our minister wears his nightclothes every time he preaches."

Some plants are affected by chloroform just as animals are. The sensitive plant loses its irritability in air charged with chloroform vapor.

Brevity.

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Editor—Well, sir, to make a long story short, I cut it down.—Baltimore American.

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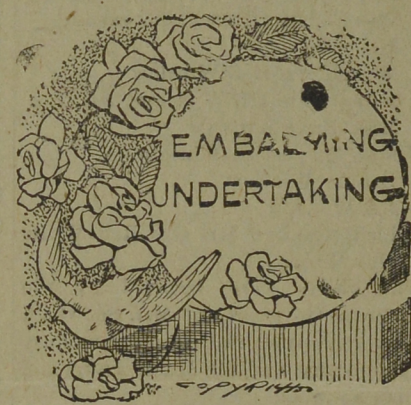
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