

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)

"The larger package," said Donald in a monotonous tone, as if he were repeating a lesson, "contains \$32,000; the smaller contains \$8,000. The bills are of many denominations. I don't know why."

"The money came from several sources," said I. "It is to be used in payment for part of what is known as the Hackett interest. Mr. Hackett was my partner, who died many years ago. He left a considerable part of his interest to an aunt, whose children have since inherited it. It is her oldest son whom we are going to buy out. Of course, we can pay him by check, but for certain reasons we wanted to have a good supply of legal tender on hand."

"That's Mr. William Hackett, isn't it?" asked Donald. "I remember seeing him here last winter when I was at home. He's the man with the red face, red whiskers, red hair—everything red, even his necktie, as I recall him."

"That's the man," said I. "Well, uncle," he returned, "I hope Mr. Hackett may get the money, if that's your intention, but there's another man after it."

I perceived that we had got down to the root of the matter.

"Another man?" I queried.

"There is a pale, hard featured man, with prominent ears and a brutal look about the mouth," said the boy. "He has lips that are as stiff and hard as iron. His chin has a little peaked point with a queer dimple that looks like a shot hole. The left side of his mouth is lower than the right. He is coming here for this money. He is about 5 feet 9 inches tall and of medium weight, a trifle thin perhaps. I can't say how old he is, but his hair is grizzled, though I wouldn't wish to speak definitely about that, for I never saw him with his hat off."

"You've seen him?" I exclaimed. Donald smiled at me, and, extending his hand, he tapped upon the drawer of the safe. I understood immediately that he had not seen the individual in the ordinary way of mortal vision.

"You think that he is coming here for this money?" said I.

"Uncle, I know it," replied Donald. "I know that he intends to get this money and that he feels perfectly sure about it, and, the worst of it is, that I keep having the impression of his getting it unless something very unusual, something quite out of the ordinary, happens to prevent. I don't seem to have any confidence in the strength of the safe or in our watchman, and I don't know whether it would do any good to take the money and put it somewhere else."

"What do you want us to do?" I asked. "Set a special watch?"

"The thing that would please me best," he replied, "would be to have this matter a secret between you and me. Can't we do that, Uncle John? Don't tell my father or mother or anybody. Just let me wander down here every evening and sleep on that couch. Nobody need know, and if nothing happens you won't laugh at me."

I answered that I could not allow him to take the risk, and I held to this opinion although he protested that there was no ground for alarm.

"This man wouldn't make a luncheon for me, uncle," said he, squaring his broad shoulders. "I'd be positively ashamed to lay a hand upon him in violence. Besides, I'm bring down my shotgun if you'd feel any safer."

We discussed the matter for a few minutes, with the result that I tele-

phoned to New York for a detective whom I have occasionally consulted. He is at the head of one of the best private bureaus and prides himself upon a personal acquaintance with every criminal of consequence in the country.

That evening after dinner Donald and I went out for a walk, and in a secluded place which had been designated in advance we met Mr. Graves Reedy, the detective. When the case was unfolded to this astute and experienced man, he confessed that he noted in it some slight flavor of the unusual.

"I ain't exactly accustomed to having descriptions come in this way," said he, "but I'll tell you one thing right off the griddle—I know the man. I ain't seen him in some time and thought he was out of business. It was said that he'd gone to Australia, and then I was told that he was dead. But, dead or alive, David Creel, alias Williams, alias Carney, is the man."

"You recognize him?" said I.

He spread out his hands as one who dismisses a matter that is all settled.

"Perfect," said he. "There's only one Scotch Davy—that's his nickname. He's a safe blower, and a good one. He must be sixty years old by this time."

"He didn't look it," said Donald.

"He's a well preserved man," rejoined the detective, "or was the last time I saw him. He's always lived right; never dissipated or had any bad habits. He was a good man in his way and kind to his family. Did you notice how he was dressed?"

"A sort of dark sack suit, as I remember," replied Donald.

"Kind of a reddish brown?"

"Yes, with a faint red stripe."

"You mean what they call an invisible check," said the detective—"stripes up and down and crossways?"

"Precisely."

Reedy rubbed his head.

"That's the suit he was wearing nine years ago when I saw him last," said he. "Can't have it yet. Be worn out before this time. By gee! It begins to look as if he was dead."

He laughed softly and then became serious.

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"My advice to you, Mr. Harrington," said he, "is just this: Leave the whole business to me. If there's anything in this, we'll nip the man right here. If there isn't anything in it, you don't want a word said. Am I right?"

I assented, but ventured to inquire what steps he intended to take.

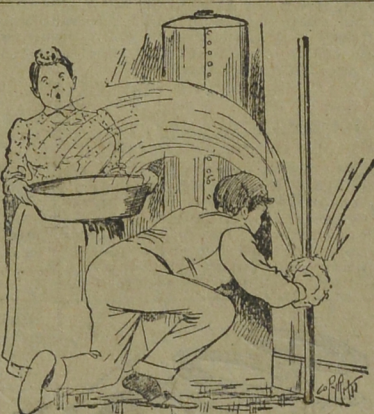
"I'll hang around," said he. "If Scotch Davy is going to do this job, he's been in town to look the ground over. If he was going to do it tonight, he'd come gently walking in from one of the neighboring towns about 10 o'clock or so and lay around behind a fence till it was time to operate. That's his way on a job like this. I know him. I'll bet a hat that I can go lay down in a place where Davy will fall over me if he's our man. I know him as well as that."

"Where would it be?" I inquired with interest, for I like these men of fine instinctive perception who can foresee the acts of their natural enemies.

"There's a path comes up across lots from the railroad station," he replied. "It splits in a field, and one half of it runs up to your office, as you call it, while the other goes to Elm street just at the junction with your private way. Davy will loaf along that path because that's where nobody ever goes at night."

It struck me as a distinct probability. I asked whether Reedy thought that there was any chance of Mr. Creel's "operating" immediately, and he replied that he saw no reason for delay.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



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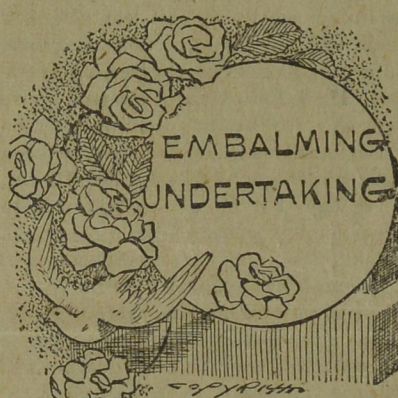
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