By Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie The Golden Hoard Y

SYNOPSIS

Horace Denslow, New York financier, is slain in a Georgia hunting lodge, where he has flown with Pilot Davy Allen to cache some of the precious metal. Prescott, Denslow's manager, warned by a mysterious woman's voice over the phone. phones Linda Telfair by long distance to hurry to the lodge, which adjoins her plantation. There she finds Denslow's body and bits of paper which form a note incriminating to Gregory Denslow. the murdered man's son. She hides the scraps. Mrs. Denslow has divorced the financier because of another woman in his life and that woman's son, who was Davy Allen, the pilot. Linda spies the lifeless body of Allen perched in a tree. Old Lucius, family retainer, discovers a "conjure stone," which Prescott cracks open. revealing to Linda bars of gold. At the inquest the "other woman" in Denslow's life. Mrs. Berteau, makes a scene. Davy Allen's widow murmurs words which Linda recognizes as those on the page before Denslow when she found him dead. Words from the Psalms: "For, lo, the wicked bend their bow." Gregg receives through the mail a letter containing a cipher. Linda finds the key in the Psalms, "For, lo, the wicked . . . etc." Kate Kelly, aviatrix, flies Linda to New York, where authorities open Denslow's safety deposit boxes. Linda learns that Davy Allen's widow has found another cipher containing a Bible quotation and the word "Chicago." In Denslow's safety deposit boxes are found more ciphers. Gregg goes to Chicago to trace hidden gold there. Linda flies home, and finds that treasure concealed there has been discovered and carried away by "enemies."

INSTALLMENT XII.

MUIS night, Kate and Linda shared Linda's room. Kate had a room for herself; for there were plenty of spare bedchambers in the huge old homestead. But neither girl could sleep. Kate as little as Linda.

For if Linda was haunted by a vision of Gregg, alone, walking into some deadly danger. Kate had just visited the woods where Davy Allen had been killed; and she had witnessed the proof that the killers now were collecting the first proceeds of the murders.

The girls had undressed and, in kimonos, lay on Linda's bed talking everything over, puzzling, thinking.

Squalls of rain pelted the window panes, and the thunder and lightning persisted, but distantly. The glow from Linda's bed lamp dimly lit the room.

"Gregg got there tonight-flying," said Linda. "Chicago? Easy," agreed Kate. "'They sure must have worked swift at that swamp . . ! 'They' tried to make Davy tell them about itthe wall and the swamp. But he didn't."

" No." "Or they'd have got to the wall before this." "Yes. They finally read the code."

"The easiest sheets, anyway," Kate said. "After all, the key was practically told in Davy's letter that was read at the inquest. But that verse won't help with the other sheets-unless they know something we don't."

"And we know something they probably to the loop and don't," Linda speculated.

"What?

"The other verse that was with Davy's papers.'

"But that's no good, or we're no good," Kate lamented. "Like enough it means nothing. If it's connected with the cipher, maybe it was a verse they were going to use-and didn't." "Maybe," agreed Linda.

in this house?"

Yes," said Linda. "Why?"

"Why? I'm a rotten copier; careless as hell. You-we've been working from your copy of my copy of a verse Mabel had. You copied right. but I bet I copied wrong. That would explain

The twenty-nine following figures supplied these letters in order:

ownportraitonefootback tendown.

Dividing the words and punctuating, they had Directly under own portrait, one foot back. ten down.

"Where's his portrait?" demanded Kate. Mr. Denslow's portrait. It can't mean Davy's: he'd have none. Where's Denslow's? '

"I don't know," said Linda. "But Gregg would. He's in Chicago."

"Davy wrote 'Chicago' with that verse, remember? Where's Gregg-in Chicago?

"It's two o'clock," said Linda. "Half-past two. He's been to look at his father's house, and he's at the hotel."

"What hotel?"

"The Drake. He'll register under the name George West. He ought to be asleep.'

"He'll be glad to wake for this." "Let's see what else we have for him, Kate." Linda was at the third sheet already; but it yielded nothing intelligible. But the next she took up gave:

In my first secret drawer my name at the Pioneer, St. Paul.

The new key resolved neither of the remaining ciphers. Like the verse, "For, lo, the wicked . . ." the verse, "The heathen are . turned two of the pages, copied from the sheets in Horace Denslow's safe deposit box, into letters which spelled words; it failed utterly to make sense of the figures on the four other pages.

By three o'clock Kate and Linda agreed on this, and agreed, taking the cheap night rates candles. for an added argument, that now was the time to phone Gregg in Chicago.

They went downstairs together and Linda put in the call.

Very promptly the Drake hotel answered; but Mr. George West's room did not.

Mr. West had not been seen since he registered early in the evening and left a bag in the room .

The plane in which Gregg flew made Chicago in slightly over seven hours, as the

fog which late in that day confused the coast did not reach into the west. The sky was clouded, but the air was clear, and a raw, hard wind blew over the dark waters of the lake as the plane cut across its southern end. Dust scurried along the airdrome, blurring the landing lights; it was a blustery

March night in Chicago. Gregg waived his right to

a seat in the airdrome motor car took a taxi by himself. He would not have stopped first at the Drake. but it was directly on his way: and to register and drop

his bag delayed him barely five minutes. He found no messages Suddenly Kate sat up straight. "Got a Bible awaiting him, so he knew that neither his mother nor Linda had learned anything more of importance.

> HE LEFT the hotel on foot, for it was barely half a mile to the mansion which, more than any other of the mansions which his father had

Brett was the gardener.

"Where were you, Brett?" Gregg asked. "Over the garage. I live there now. This anybody want to kill a fine man like him?" bell rings there now."

Other people were passing and staring; and there was someone across the street who was standing and watching.

"Got the key, Brett?" Gregg asked.

"I always carry the keys," boasted Brett, and produced a bunch, from which he selected one that fitted the iron padlock. With the chain thrown off, the gate stuck so that Gregg helped him push it back. Brett locked it behind them and they went up to the door.

W ITH fingers strangely trembling, Gregg inserted the key he had carried and he opened the huge, heavy oak door.

They stepped into a vestibule, and to a second door which responded to the same key, after Brett had struck a match so that Gregg could find the keybole. They closed both doors behind them and stood within the house, stagnant of air and hollow sounding and lit by the tiny taper of paper match burning out in Brett's fingers.

"'Lectricity's turned off," said Brett, and with his last word they were in utter darkness. " I'll go back for my flashlight."

"Never mind," said Gregg, match box in his fingers, and he stepped to a candelabrum on the mantel. The wax in the candles was old as himself or older, he thought as he applied the match. He could not remember when that black iron candelabrum had not been there; and never had it been lit. The wax felt hard and cracked,

in the center of the hall became visible in the candle light, but gave back no sparkle. A miasma seemed to have saturated the thick carpets. The staircase yawned upward toward the inscrutable second floor like a steep road that led to something which waited patiently and horridly above. Over the furniture were white slip covers, making of each chair a shrouded specter.

us." he whispered, "he'd say who shot him. . . Why did anybody do it, Mr Gregg? Why did 'You've read the papers, haven't you. Brett? '

"Sure I've read the papers; every one." "Then you know he was hiding gold."

"And you think-I know. Mr. Gregg-that those men who was tapping for pipes maybe was looking for something else here. But they wasn't. They didn't know this was Mr. Denslow's house till they asked me. Their orders was to come and inspect at this number. . They was downstairs in the basement when one of them said to me, 'Whose dump is this?' 'Mr. Denslow's.' I said. 'Any relation to the Denslow killed down in Georgia?' they said, or something like that. 'The same man,' I told them, and it certainly surprised them. They'd been reading about him, and here they was in his house. They wanted to know all about him ... what he looked like. Was there a portrait I could

AN HOUR later Gregg concluded his examina-tion of the house, with old Brett accompanying him. Nothing, so far as he could discover. had been disturbed; the men who had "inspected" the basement had left no marks which were either alarming or suggestive. Gregg gathered from Brett some description of his father's last visit to the house. It had been last autumn-September, Brett placed it, by memory of the flowers which then had been in bloom.

show them? . . ."

Mr. Denslow and Mr. Allen had come together and brought baggage with them. They had he wick burned. He lit them all-seven stayed at the house for two days, but engaged no servants; they had not "opened" the house The many-faceted crystal chandelier that hung at all, not even taking the covers off the furniture. Mr. Denslow did not sleep at the house. but Mr. Allen did-making his own bed and looking after himself. The water and light had been turned on for their stay and then turned off again and the house closed.

They both-and Mr. Allen especially-spent a good deal of time in the house, but Brett did not know what they were doing.

Gregg decided to spend the night in the house and Brett offered to stand on watch with him, but Gregg sent him to his rooms over the garage. The old man went out the rear door and returned after a moment with a pistol and a flashlight, which Gregg accepted and dismissed Brett for the night and locked

> himself in alone. He made another round of the house, alone, from cellar to attic, carefully guarding his light so that it could not be seen from outside. Indeed, there was little danger of it, for, though the upper

windows were not shuttered, heavy shades everywhere had been drawn down. He returned to his "own room."

at last and sat down. He had brought with him a single candle.

which he lit and

laid the revolver on

Old Brett fully felt it. " If

He returned to the first floor and waited, wide awake, until davlight, when he started another round of inspection which halted before the portrait of his tather.

Little light leaked in from the outside day, but it proved enough reinforcement to the flashlight to disclose what Gregg had missed during the night; the portrait had been cut and ripped. The canvas had not been torn away but, it seemed, slit open and left in place.

Gregg examined the damage in curious excitement. It was impossible that the canvas had split so of itself. Plainly it had been slit or ripped and pushed back and then allowed to hang in place again. It was impossible, also. that this destruction had been done before the night, for Gregg had stood before the portrait and observed it too closely.

Some one was at the rear door. Old Brett. "Anything happen. Mr Gregg?

"Come in, Brett." He led the gardener to the portrait. "Was that ripped before I came, Brett? "

The old man stared. "Why, no, sir."

"Could you or I have done it by accident last night? "

"How could we, not knowing it, Mr. Gregg?" "That's it, Brett, we couldn't. So some one was in and did it."

"In the house with you last night. sir?"

"For a while, Brett, I was asleep," and he told the old man of his alarm. Brett had heard nothing; but he, too, had slept.

"That's good." said Gregg. "Now you keep watch in here. I'm going out. Whoever comes. don't tell anybody I've been here. And don't let any one in, no matter who they say they are or what orders they have. I'll be back soon."

He let himself out the rear door, as inconspicuously as possible, and, hurrying about the block to the boulevard, he soon hailed an early taxt and reached the hotel where he learned at last after seven o'clock, that Linda had phoned hun four hours earlier, from Georgia.

He rushed to his room and started a call through

INDA snatched at the phone as it began to ring; she had sat beside it all night.

Long distance! Yes! Yes! Chicago calling. O, there was the voice, and it was Gregg's! "You're all right? Gregg! That's you-and you're all right? "

"Of course I'm all right. I stayed at father's house last night, Linda. That was all." "What happened, Gregg?'

"Nothing happened." The slitting of the portrait was not a thing to tell now. "Anything happened there?"

"Gregg, the stone wall is gone-the part beyond the tree. They'd taken it, trucked it away."

" What? "

She told him . . . "But we've read two more of the cipher sheets."

"Two more? How?"

"Kate Kelly and I: we figured them out. They're based on another key. Never mind that now. We've read two more sheets from the vault."

"What do they say?"

"Gregg, where's a portrait of your father?" "What do you want to know that for? It's in his house here: the house where I stayed last night. And it was just slit; cut from top to bottom."

"Gregg, what are you saying? The portrait . Listen, Gregg, listen. This is the left burning after was slit? first message we read : Directly under own por trait, one foot back, ten down.

everything, wouldn't it?"

"It might!" cried Linda, jumping up. "If you wrote it wrong, it might!"

She ran downstairs in bare feet for the Bible. "Psalms, I'd say, wouldn't you?" Kate challenged as they opened the Bible before themselves. "I used to go to church."

"The other was from the Psalms," said Linda. "And that sounds like a psalm verse."

"All right; we begin at the beginning." But they had only two pages to turn and three to read before they came upon it: "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."

It was the fifteenth verse of the ninth Psalm For a moment, after finding it, neither girl saw the mistake which they had made; then it was Kate who spied it.

"'Have' for 'are'!" she almost shouted. "See, Linda: 'The heathen are sunk down,' not have sunk down.' It's a three letter word instead of a four: of course it threw out all of the count of letters beyond that point."

Linda saw and snatched up the chart she had made with the verse of the Psalm written out and with all the letters numbered. She wrote in "are" for "have." but did not wait to renumber all the following letters. She let the chart stand and mercly subtracted in her mind one digu from each number over the letters after "are

W ITH this corrected key she attacked the sheet of the unsolved ciphers which hap pened to be on top. It gave her nothing with any meaning. Then she set at the one starting with the figures:

61 22 68 46 53 7 84 58 Now 61 gave her d and 22 gave her i. 68 gave her r and 46 gave e. Then she wrote in rapid succession: c t.

Direct.

84 required her to begin the verse over again and take the fourth letter, which was h, or else to count on into the next verse, which began with the words: "The Lord .

The eighty-fourth letter was L. which Linda took confidently after she observed that the fifty-eighth was y.

Directly-read the message; and proceeded with the figures 15 80 18 5 86, which resolved instantly into the word under.

owned, had been Gregg's "home." He wanted to approach it unwatched.

It was a tremendous brick house with round, turretlike towers at both corners and a roof of heavy slate. It was overgrown with ivy and guarded by a high, sinister looking iron fence. It was utterly dark; not a light, not a glint from within. Heavy shutters, strange to Gregg's memory of the house, ensconced the lower windows and prevented them even from reflecting the lights from the street. The upper panes were bare, but, being above the street lamps. they showed no reflection. The house was dark, dead It seemed to Gregg as he gazed at it that when his father had died the last sense of life had passed also from this deserted mansion near the shore of the gray, cold lake.

He looked up at the windows which had been his-his own-through which the sun had shone yellow and warm upon him in the mornings when he had been a child. He thought of himself not as a grown man here on the street, but as a little boy up in that room. What ghosts would rise to greet him within, including the ghost of his own childhood!

Hastily he crossed the street and tried the great iron gate. It was fastened by a chain nadlocked Grege had a house key but not the Ley to this huge padlock. He tak for the ball or the iron gatepost. It was still there, and he pressed the button and wondered, if it rang, what echoes it might arouse. He could hear no response at all.

Gregg did not move. To attempt to go about to the rear of the house meant to go about the block to the alley and then by the alley back to the house again; for the high iron fence with its spearhead palings ran in front to right and left until they touched the walls of an apartment on each side.

A short broad figure approached, limping with a jerky lurch that warmed Gregg's pulses with memories.

Brett!" He hurried to the little old man Hello, Brett!"

" Mr Gregg!" said Brett, panting for breath. "You here? You here? And J thought it was boys at the bell-just boys at the bell! Or the reporters again they'd come about in back. They know where to find me."



"Anybody been inside here recently?" Gregg his old desk beside the torch. asked.

"Nobody," Brett replied. "Not here."

"You mean," said Gregg, catching his tone, "not in the house at all? Or not in this part of the house? "

"There were two men for the basement," replied Brett. "Inspectors-that's all." " Inspectors? "

Gas inspectors. The gas is turned off in the house; but there was a leak in the block. They wanted to inspect to be sure it wasn't in the pipes in our basement. . . They had the the basement, and I stuck with them."

"When was this?" asked Gregg. "Before my father was killed-or after?"

"Today." It was plain that Brett now was uneasy about it. "But I just let them in the basement "

"What did they do?"

"They looked for the leak, Mr. Gregg." "Did they find it?"

No. They decided there wasn't none.

'llow did they look?

They smelt around and tapped around." Tapped for a leal?

The old man felt himself criticized and said unsteadily, "They said they was locating pipes." "All right," said Gregg kindly. "Don't bother about it." And he stepped again to the mantel lifted off the candelabrum he had lit, and carried it into the drawing room, the seven yellow tips of flame bending and almost extinguished. He stood and they burned straight again and gave him. from the dusk before him, the likeness of his father.

TIS father was standing, and the portrait had L been placed so low that it was almost as if his father confronted him-his father as he had been ten years ago, when Gregg worshiped him and all the world admired him. What an amazing, uncanny resurrection and rejuvenation! The flicker of the candle made the lips and the but eves seem to move; the hand seemed to twitch as his father's had, nervously.

Old Brett fully felt it. "If he could speak to

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he could speak to us," he he switched out his whispered. "he'd say who electric torch: he shot him . . .

The still, lifeless air of the house seemed to him suddenly unbreathable and he blew out his candle and carefully, and as silently as possible. opened a window which did not face the street: but it let in fresh air and through it the sound of traffic restored consciousness of the living. external world.

For a while he preferred it, then he lowered the window gently, locked it, drew the dark shade to the sill and lit his candle. He had left the room door open so he could hear the slightest sound from below, but was rewarded with only order," Brett continued, "so I let them just into an occasional creak, which he knew to be panels or flooring slightly contracting in the night cold he had admitted.

> THERE was a sound of a shot, or like a shot. muffled and far away. It might have been a backfire from a car in the street; it might have been nothing actual at all but merely a shock to his own sensation from some startling figment of a dream. For Gregg had fallen asleep For how long, he did not know since he had heat no rechange of the time that passed while he sat in his chair and pondered and tecalled Now it was nearly four o'clock, as he saw by his watch in the light of the candle burned down to a guttering stub. And he was surer there had been a shot-a sudden, evil stab of sound, muffled by wall or floor.

> Gregg stood up and seized his pistol. No sound: nothing. He took his flashlight in hand. but left it darkened, and he blew out his candle. Nothing, no noise or stir in the house. Nothing, indeed, outside except the wind, which seemed to be rising a little. Gregg stepped from his room in the pitch darkness of that shuttered house and. feeling his way by the wall, he slowly descended the carpeted stairs.

> When he gained the lower floor without alarm of any sort, he took position in a corner of the hall and flashed on his light and darted its beam about. It disclosed only the ghostly furniture. and it evoked no response. He examined the door and windows; went to the rear and did the same: he looked into the basement. Nothing stirred; nothing had been changed.

"We're sure of one more message, too." "What does that sav?

"In my first secret drawer my name at the Pioneer, St. Paul."

"I can see part of it," said Gregg. "Father when he was just a little boy, had a secret drawer in his desk. He always liked that sort of thing I suppose it was his start towards what hap pened, when his mind broke He told me about that secret drawer, once: he showed it to me He called it his first secret drawer." "Where is it. Gregg?'

" In the old house-that used to be his father's -in Lake Forest"

"Out there, too!"

"I don't know myself what the end of the message means: but I bet we'll understand when we look into that old desk-if I get there first O, my God, Linda, I want to talk to you! Hew can I hang up this phone with you at the other end: but that portrait I see it now! Goodby ! "Gregg' O. Gregg. don't go. Get help; don t

take chances. Don't go!" . . . But, already. he was gone.

He took a cab back to his father's house. avoid ng, as before, giving the street number and for this caution he was well rewarded when the taxi approached the street where he told the driver to let him out.

Something had happened half a square beyond ; early as it was, a crowd had collected. A police ambulance had arrived and was backed up. waiting.

Gregg paid off his cab and, on foot, touned tocrowd.

"Somebody shot," he was told in answer to his query.

"Just now?"

"Naw. Last night, they say, but they inst found him. Nice looking man: well dressedbut nothing to identify him."

"Killed?" asked Gregg "Dead?"

"I'd say so. Seen him?"

"No," said Gregg

"Then take a look. They'll let you. They want to identify him.'

So Gregg took a look: and saw-Niles Evans. -ft opyright: 1922 By Edwin Halmen and Philip Wylie)

(To be continued)

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