

Seven Keys TO Baldpate

By EARLY DEER BIGGERS

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"Joe," he said firmly, "take me to that money at once."

"It's out here," replied Bland. He saw Hayden disappeared through the dining room door into the darkness. Curgan and Max followed close behind.

Met with excitement, Mr. Magee slipped from his place of concealment. A battle fit for the gods was in the air. He must be in the midst of it. Perhaps again in a three cornered fight it would be the third party that would emerge victorious.

In the darkness of the dining room he bumped into a limp, clinging figure. It proved to be the hermit of Baldpate mountain.

"I got to talk to you, Mr. Magee," he whispered in a frightened tremolo. "I got to have a word with you this minute."

"Not now!" cried Magee, pushing him aside. "Later."

The hermit wildly seized his arm. "No, now," he said. "There's strange goings on here, Mr. Magee. I got something to tell you—about a package of money I found in the kitchen."

Mr. Magee stood very still. Beside him in the darkness he heard the hermit's excited breathing.

Undecided, Mr. Magee looked toward the kitchen door, from behind which came the sound of men's voices. The hermit of Baldpate fairly trembled with news.

"Since I broke in on you yesterday morning," he said in a low tone, "one thing has followed another so fast that I'm a little dazed."

"You have nothing on me there, Peters," Magee answered.

"Well," went on the hermit, "as I say, through all this downpour of people, including women, I've hung on to one idea. I'm working for you. That's why I feel I ought to give what information I got to you."

Mr. Magee agreed impatiently.

"When you find women," Peters continued, "there you find things beyond understanding. His 'why'—"

"Get to the point."

"Well, yes. This afternoon I was hunting around in the big refrigerator with a candle, thinking maybe some little token of food had been left over from last summer's rush—something in a can that time cannot wither nor custom stale, as the poet says—and away up on the top shelf, in the darkest corner, I found a little package."

"There was money in that package—lots of it; enough to found a university or buy a woman's gowns for a year. I was examining it careful-like when a shadow came in the doorway. I looked up."

"Who?" asked Magee breathlessly.

"That little, blinky eyed, Professor Bolton was standing there, most owl-like and interested. He came into the refrigerator. 'That package you have in your hand, Peters,' he says, 'belongs to me. I put it in cold storage so it would keep. I'll take it now.' Well, Mr. Magee, I'm a peaceful man. I could have battered that professor into a learned sort of jelly if I'd wanted to, but I'm a great admirer of Mr. Carnegie on account of the library, and I go in for peace. I knew it wasn't exactly the thing, but—"

"You gave him the package?"

"That's hardly the way I would put it, Mr. Magee. I made no outcry or resistance when he took it. 'I'm just a cook,' I says, 'in this house. I ain't the trusted old family retainer that retains its fortunes like a safety deposit vault.' So I let go the bundle. It was worth of me, I know, but I sort of got the habit of giving up money, being married so many years."

"Peters," said Mr. Magee, "I'm sorry your grip was so insecure, but I'm mighty glad you came to me with this matter."

"He told me I wasn't to mention it to anybody," replied the hermit, "but as I say, I sort of look on it that we were here first, and if our guests get to chasing untold wealth up and down the place, we ought to let each other in on it."

"Correct," answered Magee. "You are a valuable man, Peters. I want you to know that I appreciate the way you have acted in this affair." Four shadowy figures tramped in through the dining room door.

CHAPTER XVII. The Open Window.

MAGEE stood up, and in the light of the fire met Hayden. Now he saw that the face of the latest comer was scheming and weak and that under a small blond mustache a very cruel mouth sought to hide. The stranger gazed at Magee with an annoyance plainly marked.

"A friend of mine—Mr.—er—Downs, Mr. Magee, muttered Bland.

"Oh, come now," smiled Magee.

"Let's tell our real names. I heard you greeting your friend a minute ago. How are you, Mr. Hayden?"

He held out his hand. Hayden looked at him angrily in the eyes.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked.

"Do you mean," said Magee, "that you didn't catch the name. It's Magee—William Hallowell Magee. I hold a record hereabouts, Mr. Hayden. I spent nearly an hour at Baldpate Inn—alone. You see, I was the first of our amiable little party to arrive. Let me make you welcome. Are you staying to dinner? You must."

"I'm not," growled Hayden.

"Don't believe him, Mr. Magee," sneered the mayor, "he doesn't always say what he means. He's going to stay, all right."

"Yes, you'd better, Mr. Hayden," advised Bland.

"Huh—delighted, I'm sure," snapped Hayden.

"Peters," said Magee, "an extra plate at dinner, please. I must leave you for a moment, gentlemen." He saw that their eyes followed him eagerly—full of suspicion, menacing.

Hayden slipped quickly between Magee and the stairs. The latter faced him smilingly, reflecting as he did so that he could love this man but little. (To be Continued.)

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For Coroner.

I hereby announce myself a candidate for Coroner of Sumter county, subject to the rules of the Democratic party.

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I hereby announce myself a candidate for reelection to the magistrature's office, 4th district, Sumter county.

J. A. HODGE.

Exterminate the Cockroach.
The cockroach acts as an insect porter of typhoid fever, bubonic plague and possibly cancer. Several years ago an epidemic of typhoid fever on a United States warship was proved to be propagated by cockroaches. In a recent issue of the London Lancet, Dr. W. Melville Davison calls attention to the fact that the cause of cancer may be an alga or vegetable micro-organism which is found in the intestines of several species of roaches.

Gave the Thing Away.
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