

An abstract painting featuring a large, dark, eye-like shape on the left side. Inside this shape, there are two yellow stars. A yellow line extends from the lower star towards the right. The background is a mix of dark blue, black, and brown tones with some red and orange streaks. The overall style is expressive and textured.

**The  
Blind Spot**

**Austin Hall and  
Homer Eon Flint**



# **THE BLIND SPOT**

**By Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint**

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE LURE AND LORE OF “THE BLIND SPOT”

BY FORREST J ACKERMAN

The Blind Spot opens with the words: “Perhaps it were just as well to start at the beginning. A mere matter of news.” Suppose I use them in the same sense:

A mere matter of news: The first instalment of this fabulous novel was featured in *Argosy-All-Story-Weekly* for May 14, 1921. Described as a “different” serial, it was introduced by a cover by Modest Stein. In the foreground was the profile of a girl of another dimension—ethereal, sensuous, the eternal feminine—the Nervina of the story. Filmy crystalline earrings swept back over her bare shoulders. Dominating the background was a huge flaming yellow ball, like our Sun as seen from the hypothetical Vulcan—splotched with murky, mysterious globii vitonae. There was an ancient quay, and emerging from the ultramarine waters about it a silhouetted metropolis of spires, domes, and minarets. It was 1921, and that generation thus received its first glimpse of the alien landscape of *The Blind Spot* and the baroque beauty of an immortal woman of fantasy fiction.

The authors? Homer Eon Flint was already a reigning favourite with post-World-War-I enthusiasts of imaginative literature, who had eagerly devoured his *Queen Of Life* and *Lord Of Death*, his *King Of Conserve Island* and *The Planeteer*. Austin Hall was well known and popular for his *Almost Immortal*, *Rebel Soul*, and *Into The Infinite*.

Then came this epoch-making collaboration. When Mary Gnaedinger launched *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* magazine she early presented *The Blind Spot*, and printed it again in that magazine's companion *Fantastic Novels*. These reprints are now collectors' items, almost unobtainable, and

otherwise the story has long been out of print. Rumour says an unauthorised German version of *The Blind Spot*, has been published in book form. There is another book called *The Blind Spot*, and also a magazine story, and a major movie studio was to produce a film of the same title. However, here is presented the only hard-cover version of the only *Blind Spot* of consequence to lovers of fantasy.

Who wrote the story? When I first looked into the question, as a 15 year old boy, Homer Eon Flint (he originally spelled his name with a “d”) was already dead of a fall into a canyon. In 1949 his widow told me: “I think Homer's father contributed that middle name”—the same name (with slightly different spelling) that the Irish poet George Russell took as his pen-name, which became known by its abbreviation AE. Mrs. Flindt said of Flint's father: “He was a very deep thinker, and enjoyed reading heavy material.” Like father, like son. “Homer always talked over his ideas with me, and although I couldn't always follow his thoughts it seemed to help him to express them to another—it made some things come more clearly to him.”

Flint was a great admirer of H. G. Wells (this little grandmother-schoolteacher told me) and had probably read all his works up to the time when he (Flint) died in 1924. He had read Doyle and Haggard, but: “Wells was his favourite—the real thinker.”

Flint found a fellow-thinker in Austin Hall, whom he met in San Jose, California, while working at a shop where shoes were repaired electrically —“a rather new concept at the time.” Hall, learning that Flint lived in the same city, sought him out, and they became fast friends. Each stimulated the other. As Hall told me twenty years ago of the origin of *The Blind Spot*:

“One day after we had lunched together, I held my finger up in front of one of my eyes and said: 'Homer, couldn't a story be written about that blind spot in the eye?' Not much was said about it at the time, but four days later, again at lunch, I outlined the whole story to him. I wrote the first eighteen chapters; Homer took up the tale as 'Hobart Fenton' and wrote the chapters about the house of miracles, the living death, the rousing of Aradna's mind, and so forth, up to 'The Man from Space,' where once again I took over.”

To *The Blind Spot* Hall contributed a great knowledge of history and anthropology, while Flint's fortes were physics and medicine. Both had a

great fund of philosophy at their command.

When I met Hall (about four years older than Flint) he was in his fifties: a devil-may-care old codger (old to a fifteen-year-old, that is) full of good humour and indulgence for a youthful admirer who had journeyed far to meet him. He casually referred to his 600 published stories, and I carried away the impression of one who resembled both in output and in looks that other fiction-factory of the time, Edgar Wallace.

Finally: Several years ago, before I knew anything about the present volume, I had an unusual experience. (At that time I had no reason to think *The Blind Spot* would ever become available as a book, for the location of the heirs proved a Herculean task by itself; publishers had long wanted to present this amazing novel but could not do so until I located Mrs. Mae Hall and Mrs. Mabel Flindt.) While, unfortunately, I did not take careful notes at the time, the gist of the occurrence was this:

I visited a friend whose hobby (besides reading fantasy) was the occult, who volunteered to entertain me with automatic writing and the ouija-board. Now, I share Lovecraft's scepticism towards the supernatural, regarding it as at best a means of amusement. When the question arose of what spirits we should try to lure to our planchette, the names of Lovecraft, Merritt, Hall, and Flint popped into my pixilated mind. So I set my fingers on the wooden heart and, since my host was also a Flint admirer, we asked about Flint's fatal accident. The ouija spelled out:

**N-O A-C-C-I-D-E-N-T—R-O-B-B-E-R-Y**

There followed something about being held up by a hitch-hiker. Then Hall (or at least some energy-source other than my own conscious mind) came through too, and when I asked if he had left any work behind he replied:

**Y-E-S—T-H-E L-A-S-T G-O-D-L-I-N-G**

Later I asked his son about this (without revealing the title) and Javen Hall told me of the story his father had been plotting when he died: *The Hidden Empire*, or *The Child Of The Southwind*. Whatever was pushing the planchette failed to inform me that when I found Austin Hall's son and widow, they would put into my hands an unknown, unpublished fantasy novel by Hall: *The House Of Dawn*! Some day it may appear in print.

Meanwhile you are getting understandably impatient to explore that unknown realm of the Blind Spot. Be on your way, and bon voyage!

FORREST J ACKERMAN, Beverley Hills, Calif.



## PROLOGUE

Perhaps it were just as well to start at the beginning. A mere matter of news.

All the world at the time knew the story; but for the benefit of those who have forgotten I shall repeat it. I am merely giving it as I have taken it from the papers with no elaboration and no opinion—a mere statement of facts. It was a celebrated case at the time and stirred the world to wonder. Indeed, it still is celebrated, though to the layman it is forgotten.

It has been labelled and indexed and filed away in the archives of the profession. To those who wish to look it up it will be spoken of as one of the great unsolved mysteries of the century. A crime that leads two ways, one into murder—sordid, cold and calculating; and the other into the nebulous screen that thwarts us from the occult.

Perhaps it is the character of Dr. Holcomb that gives the latter. He was a great man and a splendid thinker. That he should have been led into a maze of cheap necromancy is, on the face, improbable. He had a wonderful mind. For years he had been battering down the scepticism that had bulwarked itself in the material.

He was a psychologist, and up to the day the greatest, perhaps, that we have known. He had a way of going out before his fellows—it is the way of genius—and he had gone far, indeed, before them. If we would trust Dr. Holcomb we have much to live for; our religion is not all hearsay and there is a great deal in science still unthought of. It is an unfortunate case; but there is much to be learned in the circumstance that led the great doctor into the Blind Spot.

## I. — RHAMDA AVEC

On a certain foggy morning in September, 1905, a tall man wearing a black overcoat and bearing in one hand a small satchel of dark-reddish leather descended from a Geary Street tram at the foot of Market Street, San Francisco. It was a damp morning; a mist was brooding over the city blurring all distinctness.

The man glanced about him; a tall man of trim lines and distinctness and a quick, decided step and bearing. In the shuffle of descending passengers he was outstanding, with a certain inborn grace that without the blood will never come from training. Men noticed and women out of instinct cast curious furtive glances and then turned away; which was natural, inasmuch as the man was plainly old. But for all that many ventured a second glance—and wondered.

An old man with the poise of twenty, a strange face of remarkable features, swarthy, of an Eastern cast, perhaps Indian; whatever the certainty of the man's age there was still a lingering suggestion of splendid youth. If one persisted in a third or fourth look this suggestion took an almost certain tone, the man's age dwindled, years dropped from him, and the quizzical smile that played on the lips seemed a foreboding of boyish laughter.

We say foreboding because in this case it is not mistaken diction. Foreboding suggests coming evil; the laughter of boys is wholehearted. It was merely that things were not exactly as they should be; it was not natural that age should be so youthful. The fates were playing, and in this case for once in the world's history their play was crosswise.

It is a remarkable case from the beginning and we are starting from facts. The

man crossed to the window of the Key Route ferry and purchased a ticket for Berkeley, after which, with the throng, he passed the turnstile and on to the boat that was waiting. He took the lower deck, not from choice, apparently, but more because the majority of his fellow passengers, being men, were bound in this direction. The same chance brought him to the cigar-stand. The men about him purchased cigars and cigarettes, and as is the habit of all smokers, strolled off with delighted relish. The man watched them. Had anyone noticed his eyes he would have noted a peculiar colour and a light of surprise. With the prim step that made him so distinctive he advanced to the news-stand.

“Pardon me; but I would like to purchase one of those.” Though he spoke perfect English it was in a strange manner, after the fashion of one who has found something that he has just learned how to use. At the same time he made a suggestion with his tapered fingers indicating the tobacco in the case. The clerk looked up.

“A cigar, sir? Yes, sir. What will it be?”

“A cigar?” Again the strange articulation. “Ah, yes, that is it. Now I remember. And it has a little sister, the cigarette. I think I shall take a cigarette, if—if—if you will show me how to use it.”

It was a strange request. The clerk was accustomed to all manner of men and their brands of humour; he was about to answer in kind when he looked up and into the man's eyes. He started.

“You mean,” he asked, “that you have never seen a cigar or cigarette; that you do not know how to use them? A man as old as you are.”

The stranger laughed. It was rather resentful, but for all that of a hearty taint of humour.

“So old? Would you say that I am as old as that; if you will look again—”

The young man did and what he beheld is something that he could not quite account for: the strange conviction of this remarkable man; of age melting into youth, of an uncertain freshness, the smile, not of sixty, but of twenty. The young man was not one to argue, whatever his wonder; he was first of all a lad of business; he could merely acquiesce.

“The first time! This is the first time you have ever seen a cigar or cigarette?”

The stranger nodded.

“The first time. I have never beheld one of them before this morning. If you will allow me?” He indicated a package. “I think I shall take one of these.”

The clerk took up the package, opened the end, and shook out a single cigarette. The man lit it and, as the smoke poured out of his mouth, held the cigarette tentatively in his fingers.

“Like it?” It was the clerk who asked.

The other did not answer, his whole face was the expression of having just discovered one of the senses. He was a splendid man and, if the word may be employed of the sterner sex, one of beauty. His features were even; that is to be noted, his nose chiselled straight and to perfection, the eyes of a peculiar sombreness and lustre almost burning, of a black of such intensity as to verge into red and to be devoid of pupils, and yet, for all of that, of a glow and softness. After a moment he turned to the clerk.

“You are young, my lad.”

“Twenty-one, sir.”

“You are fortunate. You live in a wonderful age. It is as wonderful as your tobacco. And you still have many great things before you.”

“Yes, sir.”

The man walked on to the forward part of the boat; leaving the youth, who had been in a sort of daze, watching. But it was not for long. The whole thing had been strange and to the lad almost inexplicable. The man was not insane, he was certain; and he was just as sure that he had not been joking. From the start he had been taken by the man's refinement, intellect and education. He was positive that he had been sincere. Yet—

The ferry detective happened at that moment to be passing. The clerk made an indication with his thumb.

“That man yonder,” he spoke, “the one in black. Watch him.” Then he told his story. The detective laughed and walked forward.

It was a most fortunate incident. It was a strange case. That mere act of the cigar clerk placed the police on the track and gave to the world the only clue

that it holds of the Blind Spot.

The detective had laughed at the lad's recital—almost any one had a patent for being queer—and if this gentleman had a whim for a certain brand of humour that was his business. Nevertheless, he would stroll forward.

The man was not hard to distinguish; he was standing on the forward deck facing the wind and peering through the mist at the grey, heavy heave of the water. Alongside of them the dim shadow of a sister ferry screamed its way through the fogbank. That he was a landsman was evidenced by his way of standing; he was uncertain; at every heave of the boat he would shift sidewise. An unusually heavy roll caught him slightly off-balance and jostled him against the detective. The latter held up his hand and caught him by the arm.

“A bad morning,” spoke the officer. “B-r-r-r! Did you notice the Yerbe Buena yonder? She just grazed us. A bad morning.”

The stranger turned. As the detective caught the splendid face, the glowing eyes and the youthful smile, he started much as had done the cigar clerk. The same effect of the age melting into youth and—the officer being much more accustomed to reading men—a queer sense of latent and potent vision. The eyes were soft and receptive but for all that of the delicate strength and colour that comes from abnormal intellect. He noted the pupils, black, glowing, of great size, almost filling the iris and the whole melting into intensity that verged into red. Either the man had been long without sleep or he was one of unusual intelligence and vitality.

“A nasty morning,” repeated the officer.

“Ah! Er, yes—did you say it was a nasty morning? Indeed, I do not know, sir. However, it is very interesting.”

“Stranger in San Francisco?”

“Well, yes. At least, I have never seen it.”

“H-m!” The detective was a bit nonplussed by the man's evident evasion. “Well, if you are a stranger I suppose it is up to me to come to the defence of my city. This is one of Frisco's fogs. We have them occasionally. Sometimes they last for days. This one is a low one. It will lift presently. Then you will see the sun. Have you ever seen Frisco's sun?”



“My dear sir”—this same slow articulation—“I have never seen your sun nor any other.”

“Hum!”

It was an answer altogether unexpected. Again the officer found himself gazing into the strange, refined face and wonderful eyes. The man was not blind, of that he was certain. Neither was his voice harsh or testy. Rather was it soft and polite, of one merely stating a fact. Yet how could it be? He remembered the cigar clerk. Neither cigar nor sun! From what manner of land could the man come? A detective has a certain gift of intuition. Though on the face of it, outside of the man's personality, there could be nothing to it but a joke, he chose to act upon the impulse. He pulled back the door which had been closed behind them and re-entered the boat. When he returned the boat had arrived at the pier.

“You are going to Oakland?”

It was a chance question.

“No, to Berkeley. I take a train here, I understand. Do all the trains go to Berkeley?”

“By no means. I am going to Berkeley myself. We can ride together. My name is Jerome. Albert Jerome.”

“Thanks. Mine is Avec. Rhamda Avec. I am much obliged. Your company may be instructive.”

He did not say more, but watched with unrestrained interest their manoeuvre into the slip. A moment later they were marching with the others down the gangways to the trains waiting. Just as they were seated and the electric train was pulling out of the pier the sun breaking through the mist blazed with splendid light through the cloud rifts. The stranger was next to the window where he could look out over the water and beyond at the cided shoreline, whose sea of housetops extended and rose to the peaks of the first foothills. The sun was just coming over the mountains.

The detective watched. There was sincerity in the man's actions. It was not acting. When the light first broke he turned his eyes full into the radiance. It was the act of a child and, so it struck the officer, of the same trust and

simplicity—and likewise the same effect. He drew away quickly: for the moment blinded.

“Ah!” he said. “It is so. This is the sun. Your sun is wonderful!”

“Indeed it is,” returned the other. “But rather common. We see it every day. It's the whole works, but we get used to it. For myself I cannot see anything strange in the 'sun's still shining.' You have been blind, Mr. Avec? Pardon the question. But I must naturally infer. You say you have never seen the sun. I suppose—”

He stopped because of the other's smile; somehow it seemed a very superior one, as if predicting a wealth of wisdom.

“My dear Mr. Jerome,” he spoke, “I have never been blind in my life. I say it is wonderful! It is glorious and past describing. So is it all, your water, your boats, your ocean. But I see there is one thing even stranger still. It is yourselves. With all your greatness you are only part of your surroundings. Do you know what is your sun?”

“Search me,” returned the officer. “I'm no astronomer. I understand they don't know themselves. Fire, I suppose, and a hell of a hot one! But there is one thing that I can tell.”

“And this—”

“Is the truth.”

If he meant it for insinuation it was ineffective. The other smiled kindly. In the fine effect of the delicate features, and most of all in the eyes was sincerity. In that face was the mark of genius—he felt it—and of a potent superior intelligence. Most of all did he note the beauty and the soft, silky superlustre of the eyes.

We have the whole thing from Jerome, at least this part of it; and our interest being retrospect is multiplied far above that of the detective. The stranger had a certain call of character and of appearance, not to say magnetism. The officer felt himself almost believing and yet restraining himself into caution of unbelief. It was a remark preposterous on the face of it. What puzzled Jerome was the purpose; he could think of nothing that would necessitate such statements and acting. He was certain that the man was sane.

In the light of what came after great stress has been laid by a certain class upon this incident. We may say that we lean neither way. We have merely given it in some detail because of that importance. We have yet no proof of the mystic and until it is proved, we must lean, like Jerome, upon the cold material. We have the mystery, but, even at that, we have not the certainty of murder.

Understand, it was intuition that led Jerome into that memorable trip to Berkeley; he happened to be going off duty and was drawn to the man by a chance incident and the fact of his personality. At this minute, however, he thought no more of him than as an eccentric, as some refined, strange wonderful gentleman with a whim for his own brand of humour. Only that could explain it. The man had an evident curiosity for everything about him, the buildings, the street, the cars, and the people. Frequently he would mutter: "Wonderful, wonderful, and all the time we have never known it. Wonderful!"

As they drew into Lorin the officer ventured a question.

"You have friends in Berkeley? I see you are a stranger. If I may presume, perhaps I may be of assistance?"

"Well, yes, if—if—do you know of a Dr. Holcomb?"

"You mean the professor. He lives on Dwight Way. At this time of the day you would be more apt to find him at the university. Is he expecting you?"

It was a blunt question and of course none of his business. Yet, just what another does not want him to know is ever the pursuit of a detective. At the same time the subconscious flashing and wondering at the name Rhamda Avec—surely neither Teutonic nor Sanskrit nor anything between.

"Expecting me? Ah, yes. Pardon me if I speak slowly. I am not quite used to speech—yet. I see you are interested. After I see Dr. Holcomb I may tell you. However, it is very urgent that I see the doctor. He—well, I may say that we have known each other a long time."

"Then you know him?"

"Yes, in a way; though we have never met. He must be a great man. We have much in common, your doctor and I; and we have a great deal to give to your world. However, I would not recognise him should I see him. Would you by

any chance—”

“You mean would I be your guide? With pleasure. It just happens that I am on friendly terms with your friend Dr. Holcomb.”

## II. — THE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

And now to start in on another angle. There is hardly any necessity for introducing Dr. Holcomb. All of us, at least, those who read, and, most of all, those of us who are interested in any manner of speculation, knew him quite well. He was the professor of philosophy at the University of California: a great man and a good one, one of those fine academic souls who, not only by their wisdom, but by their character, have a way of stamping themselves upon generations; a speaker of the upstanding class, walking on his own feet and utterly fearless when it came to dashing out on some startling philosophy that had not been borne up by his forebears.

He was original. He believed that the philosophies of the ages are but stepping stones, that the wisdom of the earth looked but to the future, and that the study of the classics, however essential, is but the ground work for combining and working out the problems of the future. He was epigrammatic, terse, and gifted with a quaint humour, with which he was apt, even when in the driest philosophy, to drive in and clinch his argument.

Best of all, he was able to clothe the most abstract thoughts in language so simple and concrete that he brought the deepest of all subjects down to the scope of the commonest thinker. It is needless to say that he was 'copy.' The papers about the bay were ever and anon running some startling story of the professor.

Had they stuck to the text it would all have been well; but a reporter is a reporter; in spite of the editors there were numerous little elaborations to pervert the context. A great man must be careful of his speech. Dr. Holcomb was often busy refuting; he could not understand the need of these little



twistings of wisdom. It kept him in controversy; the brothers of his profession often took him to task for these little distorted scraps of philosophy. He did not like journalism. He had a way of consigning all writers and editors to the devil.

Which was vastly amusing to the reporters. Once they had him going they poised their pens in glee and began splashing their venomous ink. It was tragic; the great professor standing at bay to his tormentors. One and all they loved him and one and all they took delight in his torture. It was a hard task for a reporter to get in at a lecture; and yet it was often the lot of the professor to find himself and his words featured in his breakfast paper.

On the very day before this the doctor had come out with one of his terse startling statements. He had a way of inserting parenthetically some of his scraps of wisdom. It was in an Ethics class. We quote his words as near as possible:

“Man, let me tell you, is egotistic. All our philosophy is based on ego. We live threescore years and we balance it with all eternity. We are it. Did you ever stop and think of eternity? It is a rather long time. What right have we to say that life, which we assume to be everlasting, immediately becomes retrospect once it passes out of the conscious individuality which is allotted upon this earth? The trouble is ourselves. We are five-sensed. We weigh everything! We so measure eternity. Until we step out into other senses, which undoubtedly exist, we shall never arrive at the conception of infinity. Now I am going to make a rather startling announcement.

“The past few years have promised a culmination which has been guessed at and yearned for since the beginning of time. It is within, and still without, the scope of metaphysics. Those of you who have attended my lectures have heard me call myself the material idealist. I am a mystic sensationalist. I believe that we can derive nothing from pure contemplation. There is mystery and wonder in the veil of the occult. The earth, our life, is merely a vestibule of the universe. Contemplation alone will hold us all as inapt and as impotent as the old Monks of Athos. We have mountains of literature behind us, all contemplative, and whatever its wisdom, it has given us not one thing outside the abstract. From Plato down to the present our philosophy has given us not one tangible proof, not one concrete fact which we can place our hands on.

We are virtually where we were originally; and we can talk, talk, talk from now until the clap of doomsday.

“What then?”

“My friends, philosophy must take a step sidewise. In this modern age young science, practical science, has grown up and far surpassed us. We must go back to the beginning, forget our subjective musings and enter the concrete. We are five-sensed, and in the nature of things we must bring the proof down into the concrete where we can understand it. Can we pierce the nebulous screen that shuts us out of the occult? We have doubted, laughed at ourselves and been laughed at; but the fact remains that always we have persisted in the believing.

“I have said that we shall never, never understand infinity while within the limitations of our five senses. I repeat it. But that does not imply that we shall never solve some of the mystery of life. The occult is not only a supposition, but a fact. We have peopled it with terror, because, like our forebears before Columbus, we have peopled it with imagination.

“And now to my statement.

“I have called myself the Material Idealist. I have adopted an entirely new trend of philosophy. During the past years, unknown to you and unknown to my friends, I have allied myself with practical science. I desired something concrete. While my colleagues and others were pounding out tomes of wonderful sophistry I have been pounding away at the screen of the occult. This is a proud moment. I have succeeded. Tomorrow I shall bring to you the fact and the substance. I have lifted up the curtain and flooded it with the light of day. You shall have the fact for your senses. Tomorrow I shall explain it all. I shall deliver my greatest lecture; in which my whole Me has come to a focus. It is not spiritualism nor sophistry. It is concrete fact and common sense. The subject of my lecture tomorrow will be: 'The Blind Spot.'”

Here begins the second part of the mystery.

We know now that the great lecture was never delivered. Immediately the news was scattered out of the class-room. It became common property. It was spread over the country and was featured in all the great metropolitan dailies.

In the lecture-room next morning seats were at a premium; students, professors, instructors and all the prominent people who could gain admission crowded into the hall; even the irrepressible reporters had stolen in to take down the greatest scoop of the century. The place was jammed until even standing room was unthought of. The crowd, dense and packed and physically uncomfortable, waited.

The minutes dragged by. It was a long, long wait. But at last the bell rang that ticked the hour. Every one was expectant. And then fifteen minutes passed by, twenty—the crowd settled down to waiting. At length one of the colleagues stepped into the doctor's office and telephoned to his home. His daughter answered.

“Father? Why he left over two hours ago.”

“About what time?”

“Why, it was about seven-thirty. You know he was to deliver his lecture today on the Blind Spot. I wanted to hear it, but he told me I could have it at home. He said he was to have a wonderful guest and I must make ready to receive him. Isn't father there?”

“Not yet. Who was this guest? Did he say?”

“Oh yes! In a way. A most wonderful man. And he gave him a wonderful name, Rhamda Avec. I remember because it is so funny. I asked father if he was Sanskrit; and he said he was much older than that. Just imagine!”

“Did your father have his lecture with him?”

“Oh, yes. He glanced over it at breakfast. He told me he was going to startle the world as it had never been since the day of Columbus.”

“Indeed.”

“Yes. And he was terribly impatient. He said he had to be at the college before eight to receive the great man. He was to deliver his lecture at ten. And afterward he would have lunch at noon and he would give me the whole story. I'm all impatience.”

“Thank you.”

Then he came back and made the announcement that there was a little delay; but that Dr. Holcomb would be there shortly. But he was not. At twelve

o'clock there were still some people waiting. At one o'clock the last man had slipped out of the room—and wondered. In all the country there was but one person who knew. That one was an obscure man who had yielded to a detective's intuition and had fallen inadvertently upon one of the greatest mysteries of modern times.