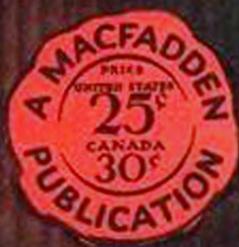


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*The PICTURE  
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*The House of the Living Dead*

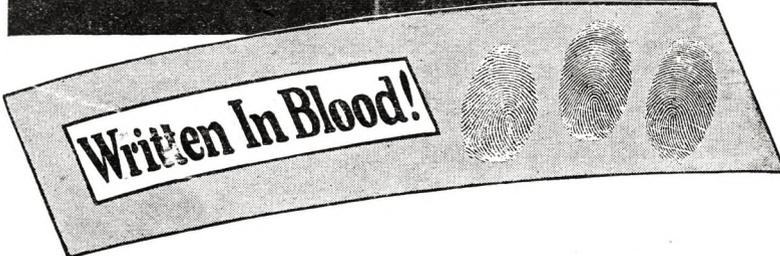
*Signed by a Ghost*

*A Witness from the  
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Vol. 3

DECEMBER, 1927

No. 6

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#### THE PHANTOM IN ARMOR

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#### WHEN GHOST SLAYS GHOST

Can human enmity reach beyond the grave? Was Captain Max killed twice?

#### THE EYE OF THE CAMERA

The strangest story of the occult that has ever come out of the shadowland of Hollywood

#### A GHOST FROM THE FLYING CIRCUS

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#### THE MAN TO WHOM PICTURES TALKED

When he looked at a photograph, he could tell whether the eyes were dead eyes. It was a strange and fatal gift

Other extraordinary and thrilling stories of contacts with the spirit world make the January issue a magazine of unusual entertainment. Do not miss them. On the newsstands November 23rd.

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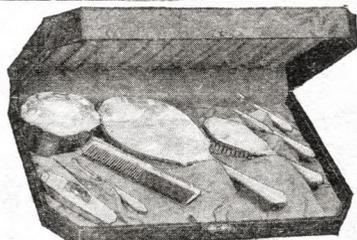
Strap Watch For MEN S-49 14K green gold-filled engraved, guaranteed 15 jewel movement, radium numerals and hands. \$27.50—\$1 with order, \$2.65 a month.



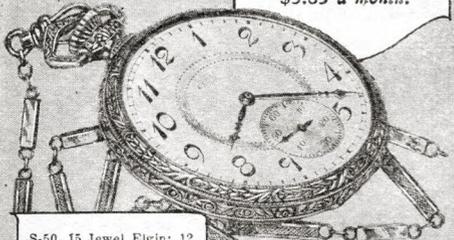
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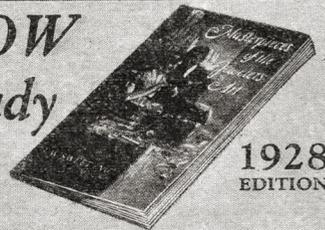


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- Under Some Old Apple Tree
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- 4118 May I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight
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- Lone Trail Rose
- 4142 Silver Threads Among the Gold
- In A Garden Rare
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- And I Don't Mean Maybe
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# Now, Let Us Discuss Magic

By ROBERT NAPIER

**A**N easy definition of magic would be, that it is a manifestation of some law as yet uncharted by science. Literally, this is true. The same applies to all phenomena which the layman calls "supernatural."

However, magic is more impressive when it appears to violate a known law than when it surges up from an origin we do not at all comprehend. We can face the new, the untried, but we tremble before the seeming destruction of accepted facts.

The fakirs of India practice the following feat: A rope is thrown up into the air. Instead of falling back, the rope uncurls itself to its full length. The far end catches on an invisible hook in the sky, and the rope hangs down straight.

A boy then climbs the rope. At the top, he sits straddle-legged—upon nothing. He draws the rope up after him. It vanishes, and so does he. A few minutes later, he pushes his way from the far edges of the crowd and rejoins his master, the fakir.

This feat is performed before large audiences. Innumerable white persons, including many Americans, have witnessed it. There is no case on record where any member of the crowd has failed to see the precise sequence of events described above.

Yet—and this is the significant point—if boy and rope be photographed in the air, the plate comes out a blank. Here is formidable black magic, indeed! Granting that the whole thing is illusion, one would suppose that an illusion so clearly materialized to the human eye would have enough of an astral body to record itself upon a photographic plate. We use the word "suppose" advisedly. The law in question has not been violated, of course; for the laws of Nature are inviolable. But it has been employed in a way unfamiliar to the average person, and the effect is profoundly uncanny.

No wonder that, in the Dark Ages, mankind ascribed this sort of necromancy to the Devil, on the ground that only his Satanic Majesty could empower mortals to overthrow, temporarily, the rules ordained by the Divine Will.

And no wonder that magic—black or white—has been the subject of some of the most thrilling stories ever written.

# The HOUSE of the

*Corpses walk and gibber in the swamps around faces of even the mildest and best loved of the*

By Arthur Branscombe  
as told to Victor Rousseau

I WAS a little late in reaching Doctor Martinus' house that morning, but it was seldom the Doctor had visitors as early as half past nine. The moment I opened the door of the waiting-room I heard the girl's soft, yet agitated tones, and, as I hesitated, not knowing whether the Doctor wanted me inside, he opened the inner door and beckoned to me.

Inside the office was a girl of about three or four and twenty, tall, slender, strikingly beautiful. Her brown eyes were just now suffused with tears that she was making no effort to conceal.

"Miss Dacres," said the Doctor, as I entered, "permit me to present my collaborator, Mr. Branscombe." He turned to me. "Miss Dacres arrived from the South late last night with the purpose of asking our assist-

primitive part of the country, and the negroes are little better than savages. Miss Dacres, would you mind telling Mr. Brans-

combe what you have told me about conditions there?" She was too agitated to be coherent, but I managed to gather the drift of her story. Supplemented by what I learned later, it was as follows:

Fifty years before, the Dacres plantation had been one of the largest in the State. The family had been settled there for some two hundred years. There were traditions that the oldest part of the house had been a treasure-house in which the notorious pirate Freeman had stored his plunder.

Twenty miles from the seacoast, it was situated at the head of what had once been a deep creek, but was now partly silted up. The extensive swamps and marshes, and the dense jungle of mangrove and scrub oak, which had overrun the cleared plantation of



ance," he said. "Pray sit down, Miss Dacres. I assure you that you can count on us to the very best of our ability." Again the Doctor turned to me. "You read about that outbreak of voodooism in Louisiana a month or two ago?" he asked.

"That horrible case of the black child that was murdered and—" I exclaimed.

"Exactly. It happened in the district from which Miss Dacres comes. The newspapers suppressed more than half the story, but it appears that a reign of terror exists among both blacks and whites there. It is a very desolate and

*Before the cabinet we saw the misty figure of a pirate forming*

two generations before, had made the whole district once more a wilderness. After the Civil War, the Dacres had fallen upon evil times. The plantation had dwindled to the size of a small farm, and the advent of the boll-weevil had completed the ruin. The last survivors of the Dacres family, Virginia and her brother, Lionel, had found themselves reduced to poverty.

The brother was still struggling to raise a few crops on the impoverished soil. But lately this terror had come upon the two!

"Roger says it is my nerves," the girl cried. "He doesn't

# LIVING DEAD

*old Eli Dacres' rotting plantation-house, and on the departed appears the look of a beast—or a devil*

believe in the supernatural. I mean Roger Chavard, the county prosecutor, who had charge of the case against those voodoo wretches. We are engaged to be married. He doesn't believe there is any connection between that outbreak and what has been happening since."

"Tell me about these things that have been happening," said the Doctor, speaking as soothingly as he might have spoken to a child.

But again the girl grew incoherent, and it was plain that she was laboring under the weight of intense apprehension. Martinus elicited the amazing story bit by bit.

"All the negroes have always believed that the house is haunted by the spirit of old Tom Freeman, the pirate," said Miss Dacres. "But nobody took it seriously until this outbreak of terrible voodooism, right at our doors. Old Mammy Nelly, who was executed, lived only a mile from us. Why, she used to come in and cook for us sometimes! She was the kindest old soul. It was incredible that she had participated in those awful rites in the swamps."

"Pardon me," interposed the Doctor, "but are you by any chance related to Eli Dacres?"

"My grandfather!" the girl exclaimed.

"He is dead, I believe?"

"He died nearly two years ago," Miss Dacres said quickly. "But what do you know about him——"

"I remember his name as the author of a work on primitive religions."

"Grandfather was a scholar, and well known among scientists, though hardly to the public at large. He wrote several books. In the last years of his life he became interested in spiritualism. His investigations into the superstitions of the negroes convinced him of its truth. He used to hold séances—but this has no bearing on——"

"Please tell me everything that occurs to you," said the Doctor.

"He wanted to find the treasure that Tom Freeman was supposed to have stored in or near our house. As we grew poorer, it became a mania with him. He was always saying that some day we would be rich beyond the dreams of avarice, in spite of the fact that the whole of the foundations have been dug up repeatedly in earlier years, in the hope of discovering this hoard. Of course, it does not exist.

"But Grandfather believed in it, and after he became a spiritualist, he believed that he was in touch with Tom



*In one hand was a cutlass, and in the other was a fantastic round bundle—like a human head!*

Freeman's ghost. He died of a stroke, two years ago, but for some weeks before that, he was undoubtedly insane. He thought Tom Freeman's spirit had taken possession of him, and he used to utter terrible blasphemies—Grandfather, who was the gentlest soul that ever lived.

"And he—oh, how could you believe this? He has been seen since his death. Not a ghost, but walking about in bodily form in broad daylight—only somehow terribly changed."

That was about all that the girl was in a condition to tell us. She insisted that it was her grandfather himself whom she had seen, and not his spirit. She had heard him cough, had heard the sounds of his footsteps on the ground.

"But he didn't know me, and his face was terrible," said Miss Dacres. "It nearly frightened me to death. Tom Snow, the only one of the negroes who has remained with us, has seen him, too. But Lionel and I will never sell the property."

"Ha! Someone wants to buy you out?" Martinus asked sharply.

"There's a syndicate wants to get possession of the land. They've offered us a small fortune. But we will never leave. I promised Grandfather not to sell after his death, and then it's been in our family for generations. Lionel is as resolute as I am, and he'd never be scared out of his home. He thinks the things that are happening are done by agents of the syndicate to frighten us. *But he hasn't seen Grandfather!*" She shot out these words with tremendous energy.

"**H**AS anything else of the kind happened?"

But Virginia Dacres' answers became vague. She spoke of noises, and said the house had always had the reputation of being haunted. It was evident that any reference to these supernatural events affected her too strongly for the question to be pressed home.

As for the syndicate, the lawyer in New Orleans who had approached her had absolutely refused to reveal the names of the heads of it.

"Now, Miss Dacres," said the Doctor, when he had elicited all the information that seemed to be obtainable, "I suggest that you take the first train back home, and Mr. Branscombe and I will come down within twenty-four hours."

"If you could only come back with me——" the girl pleaded.

"I am afraid that will be an impossibility," replied Martinus decisively. "Branscombe and I have some business that must first be attended to. But rest assured that we shall be there within twenty-four hours after your return, barring the totally unforeseen."

**T**HE Doctor seemed to fall into a brown study after Virginia Dacres had departed. I knew him well enough not to attempt to interrupt his train of thought, and accordingly busied myself with some work until, after about fifteen minutes, Martinus addressed me.

"I think, Branscombe," he said, "that this is going to be our biggest case."

With which he fell into his abstraction again, filling his pipe and puffing out great clouds of smoke. His next observation was:

"Old Eli Dacres must have been surprised to discover what a very powerful personage the Devil really is."

"Do you suppose it was the spirit of the old pirate that took possession of him?" I asked. "It is rare for a spiritual entity to revisit this earth after a century or two."

"Not when it passed out filled with bitter, violent lusts," replied the Doctor. "I haven't read much about Tom Freeman—I must look him up; but if he really left his hoard buried under the Dacres home, I should think it highly probable that some fragment of Tom Freeman is still busy prosecuting the attempt to regain it—and inspiring others to do the same."

"Unfortunately Eli Dacres appears to have been tampering with psychic things without the requisite knowledge, and under the worst possible conditions—for himself," he continued. "Yes, Branscombe, the Devil is not to be sneezed at. It was a masterpiece of His Satanic Majesty to convince the modern world that he has ceased to exist. Under cover of the universal disbelief in him, he has been exceedingly active."

"There's one point to be considered," I suggested with some hesitation, for Martinus was something of a martinet

in his methods, and disliked suggestions. "Do you think the people who want to buy the property have been up to any tricks, with the purpose of frightening the girl into selling?"

"I think it certain, Branscombe," the Doctor answered. "But I am not convinced that these tricks are not produced by evil forces—nor that it is quite so simple as might be supposed. In fact, I have been reaching certain conclusions—and I think, Branscombe, you have the right to be told."

At first, I confess, I listened with utter scepticism to what Martinus told me. But as he went on, my incredulity grew less, till it was near the vanishing point. I had been associated with the Doctor for nearly two years, but never before had I seen the thing in its true perspective. I had not understood that the opposition was so completely organized.

You must understand the difference in our life histories. Martinus was a Czecho-Slovak. He called himself a pure-blooded Czech, but from his antipathy toward the Slovaks I always imagined he had some Slovak blood in him. Even

great men have their foibles.

At fifty-odd years he had lived a life more intense than one can readily visualize. In youth he had stood upon the gallows-trap with a rope about his neck, waiting to be hanged for conspiracy against the Austrian Emperor. Although he had been granted a reprieve

at the last moment, he had seen half his comrades swung into eternity.

He had escaped from prison, had lived in exile in Paris, and, while there, had participated in the diabolical rites known to the Knights Templars, and still extant in the French capital.

Then he had joined the Church, and had devoted his life to fighting the evil forces with which he had once been associated.

He had been in intimate association with the highest dignitaries of Church and State. He had moved in that great secret society which makes history.

For years, I knew, he had been a marked man, and had been living in obscurity in America for the purpose of completing certain work.

On the other hand, I—at twenty-eight—had been a newspaper man, secretary to a Senator at Albany, a newspaper man again, and then Martinus's secretary and confidant.

A world of difference between us! And Elsie Morton wanted me to leave him, and go back to newspaper work. "Arthur," she would say, "I know that something dreadful is going to come of your association with that man. Human beings were never meant to pry into those things."

**E**LSIE had been trained in one of the New York hospitals, and was associated with a charitable organization that brought her into daily contact with the lives of suffering humanity.

She was big, and brave, and fine, and she could understand and make allowances for many things in a way that one does not often find in women, but she had a prejudice against Martinus that no arguments of mine had been able to dispel.

We were to be married when I had paid off certain debts that had devolved upon me after my father's death. We had waited three years, and there was only one year more to wait.

"The table began to advance slowly along the floor toward us, as if it was being pushed by invisible hands. Halting close beside us, it began to click out a message. . . .

"'For—God's—sake—help—me!' the message came."

Insensibly, my position with the Doctor had come between us. I could not bring Elsie to share my enthusiasm for psychical investigations. And this was the most difficult part of my life just then.

"You mean," I asked the Doctor, "that this organization among the powers of evil, of which you speak—that this outbreak in Louisiana is evidence of it?"

"Not evidence alone, but the heart and focus of it," he answered. "I hardly expect to escape with my life from the trial of strength that lies before us. Branscombe, you are engaged to be married to a charming girl. You have finished your work with me, and some day you will give my memoirs to the world. The time has come for us to part."

"You mean that you are discharging me?" I asked, stupefied.

"For your own sake, yes—because of the danger ahead."

"Suppose that I refuse to be discharged?" I said quietly.

"If you understood fully what I have been trying to tell you, I should call you an extraordinarily brave man. Otherwise, merely a rash one.

"Branscombe," he went on, "you have no idea of the magnitude of the forces for evil that are being marshaled against us. They mean to obtain a footing on this continent, where people do not believe in them, and all the cases we have investigated have been sporadic efforts toward this end. Now I believe the real test is at hand.

"My life has been at the mercy of this criminal band for ten years past. If I have been spared, it is because my death will not serve their purposes until they have destroyed my work. Branscombe, if you remain with me, you must be prepared to lose and suffer everything—you understand?"

"I understand," I answered.

"They will strike quickly, and strike hard."

"I'm staying," I said.

Martinus's hand shot out and gripped my own. He searched in his desk and drew out a clipping. "Read that," he said.

It was from a New Orleans paper, and was headed:

#### ACCUSED MURDERER IDENTIFIED AS DOUBLE OF DECEASED LAWYER

It was an astonishing story. A man charged with the commission of a singularly brutal murder had been positively identified by half a dozen witnesses with an eminent lawyer who had died suddenly, a short time before. While it was evident that the dead man could not be masquerading from the tomb, the resemblance appeared to be complete, even to a birth-mark and a scar.

"And this——" I asked, returning the clipping to the Doctor.

"The deceased lawyer was associated with Roger Chavard in the prosecution of that voodoo gang," Martinus answered.

"Then—do you connect this with what Virginia Dacres said about her grandfather's return?" I exclaimed.

For a little while the Doctor was silent. Then he reached into his desk again and brought out an engraved card. It was an invitation to Martinus "and friends" to attend a meeting of a magicians' society, that was holding its annual banquet at the Hotel Trevaylor that evening. On the card was penciled, "to meet the Chevalier Morandi."

I knew that Martinus was an amateur magician. I had seen him perform astonishing feats of legerdemain. On the face of it the invitation did not seem remarkable.

"Who is this Chevalier Morandi?" I asked.

"The leader of the dark forces in America," answered the Doctor—"the man commissioned to extend the work of diabolism on this continent, but outwardly an amiable and accomplished gentleman from France who is touring this country and giving exhibitions of conjuring. I have been expecting to hear from him, and the simultaneity of the arrival of this card and of Miss Dacres's

*Doctor Martinus amazed me! He slapped Miss Dacres hard across the face*



appeal convinces me that it is not a matter of chance. This invitation is, in effect, a challenge. You,

my dear Branscombe, with your flair for the dramatic, should derive

a certain amount of entertainment from the sight of two gentlemen in evening dress, amiably greeting each other, while they are actually at death-grips over the souls of humanity."

Was the Doctor exaggerating? He had said wilder-seeming things before, but wilder things had happened than Martinus had ever prophesied. I left him, with the understanding that I was to meet him in (Continued on page 80)

# INVISIBLE

*Ralph Roberts, Champion, rolled up ten of the strangest guessed the source of his power—until Lightning Bob*

By W. J. Rapp

THE powerful lights blazed down upon that little square of canvas in the center of the arena. The preliminary bouts were over, and the crowd stirred expectantly, impatiently awaiting the star performers.

In the press-box the telegraph instruments ticked away busily. A radio announcer began his facetious recital into a microphone that was set up at the very edge of the ring.

"The great bout is due to start in a few minutes. Gosh, I've never seen such a crowd. On all sides there is a regular ocean of faces. No danger of the promoters or the fighters starving to death. There's more money in boxing than in Wall Street, if you ask me."

The challenger, Mike Mahoney, pushed his way into the ring, followed by his seconds. The crowd cheered. The announcer went on:

"Mike Mahoney just entered the ring and that roar was the crowd's welcome. Mike looks in the pink of condition, and he certainly has all the appearance of being a tough customer. The word 'pug' is written all over his face. He has two beautiful cauliflower ears, a nose that spreads half across his cheeks, and a wicked look. Believe me, I wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley on any night—not even when the moon is shining."

Suddenly the crowd rose to its feet. There was a low rumble that grew louder until it became a veritable burst of thunder. The Champion, Ralph Roberts, was forcing his way into the ring.

fellow. The title of 'Gentleman Champion' fits him well. You'd never think he carried a knock-out in either hand. Honestly, he looks as much like a dancing-master as a prize-fighter."

I was sitting in the press-box, taking in the whole show. Personally, I couldn't get very much excited about this fight.

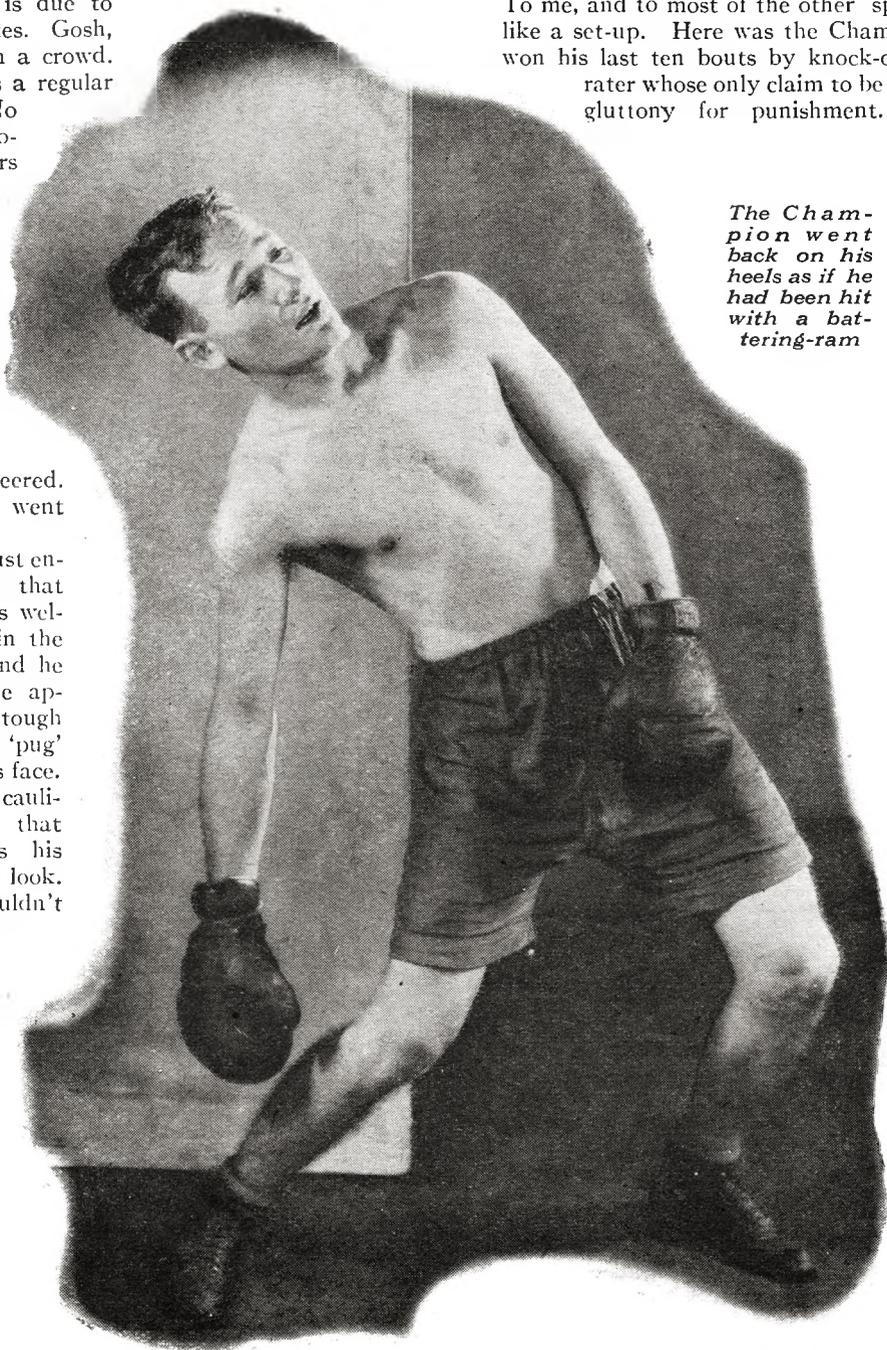
To me, and to most of the other sports-writers, it looked like a set-up. Here was the Champion, a man who had won his last ten bouts by knock-outs, meeting a third-rater whose only claim to be called a fighter was his gluttony for punishment.

The odds on the Champion ran as high as ten to one, and rightly so.

But, in spite of the bad match-making, here was this gigantic crowd, who had paid nearly a half million dollars to see what was bound to be a sure killing. It was not much of a tribute to the public's intelligence. It was, however, a mighty tribute to Ralph Roberts' popularity. The people were there to see him in action. They expected one of his characteristic knock-outs—a blow that was so quick that even the ring-siders often could not see it being put over. "The Invisible Knock-out" was what we sports-writers called it.

As the fighters were being introduced and the other ceremonies that always precede a championship bout were under way, I found myself reviewing the career of the title-holder. His was as strange a story as any in the whole history of the prize-ring.

Three years previously he had been a senior in a Middle-



*The Champion went back on his heels as if he had been hit with a battering-ram*

# KNOCK-OUTS

*victories on record—but no one, not even Roberts himself, Harrigan sent him an uncanny message from the grave*

Western state university. The Champion at that time, Kid Scanlon, had visited the university town on a barnstorming tour. It was just after the Kid had knocked out Lightning Bob Harrigan, who had been favored to take the title from him.

For years the Kid had avoided Lightning Bob, who had gone about calmly putting to sleep every fighter that his hustling little manager, Dick Terry, could get to stand up against him. Finally, the public's cry for a match between

*Roberts was quite as surprised as the crowd was*



the Kid and Bob became so insistent that the Kid was in danger of having his title taken away from him by various state boxing commissions unless he defended it. Lightning Bob was the heavy favorite. But to the surprise of everybody, the Kid won, the referee calling the bout off in the fourth round. Bob was then hanging on to the ropes, totally dazed, and horribly battered.

He had put up a miserable battle. His famous knock-out, reputed to be the mightiest wallop ever developed by a fighter, was never in evidence. He seemed groggy before he even stepped into the ring. A week after the bout, he died. Some said his death was the result of the terrible punishment he had taken, while others claimed it was caused by a broken heart. It was his first defeat, and, according to the romantics, he preferred death to what he considered disgrace.

There were also some nasty rumors of Lightning Bob having been doped. But these tales always spring up when a favorite loses, and they didn't get much credence.

Well, Kid Scanlon's tour was his way of cleaning up on the publicity resulting from his victory over Lightning Bob. He played in all the regular vaudeville houses, and part of his act was to offer fifty dollars to anyone in the audience who stayed a full round with him. No one ever went out after that fifty dollars until the Kid hit the state university where Ralph Roberts was finishing his studies.

It was a Saturday night after a big football victory in which Roberts had starred. The theater was packed with students celebrating the victory and cheering Roberts, who had been dragged out of the orchestra, with the rest of the team, and made to sit in a stage box. I had covered the game that day for my paper, and thus happened to be in the audience.

When the Kid had gone through his act of rope-skipping, bag-punching, and sparring, the usual fifty-dollar offer to anyone who could stay a round with him was made. A

youngster cried, "Roberts! Roberts! Let Roberts at him!" and soon the whole theater was yelling: "Roberts! Roberts! We want Roberts! Roberts! Roberts! We want Roberts!"

Some of his team-mates then pushed Roberts out on the stage. He accepted his being thrust into the lime-light good-naturedly. In fact, he seemed to regard the whole thing as a huge comedy. He took off his coat, shirt, and undershirt with elaborate ceremony. He permitted one of the attendants to put the gloves on his hands, all the while exchanging wise-cracks with his friends in the box. And it was with rather comic gestures that he squared off against the Kid in the small roped-off area in the

public, he always gave the story to my newspaper first.

Dick Terry, Lightning Bob Harrigan's old manager, immediately got in touch with Roberts. He wanted to take the boy under his wing. Roberts was a bit hesitant. He came from a very good family and was studying law. The fighting game didn't appeal to him very much. But Terry, with my help, convinced him that he could make a pile of "dough" in a hurry. He also showed him that the game was more respectable than it used to be. Our arguments along this line, I think, were more effective than the promises of big money.

The Kid, of course, had an alibi for his knock-out by Roberts. He said that a steel bolt from the overhead stage-rigging fell down and hit him back of the ear just as Roberts began sparring with him. He showed the bolt



center of the stage.

The Kid smiled, danced around Roberts a bit, and gave him a few light jabs. Roberts fought back rather gracefully. He was light on his feet and had a fairly good boxing carriage. His right caught the Kid on the jaw with what looked to me like a light, glancing blow. The Champion went back on his heels as if he had been hit with a battering-ram. His knees crumpled up under him. He fell forward on his face, dead to the world.

*"Ralph Roberts,"  
the medium said,  
"you will never win  
another fight"*

The theater was in a pandemonium. Roberts was quite as surprised as the crowd was. He looked at the crumpled Champion as if he could not believe his eyes. His team-mates surrounded him, boosted him to their shoulders, and carried him off the stage and down through the yelling, hysterical crowd of students. The curtain was lowered, and the unconscious Kid, surrounded by a gang of attendants, was hidden from the further view of the audience.

The story was a great "scoop" for me. It made me the leading boxing writer on my paper. And thereafter my own career and that of Ralph Roberts ran side by side. We became fast friends, and if he ever had anything for the

to everybody. He must have bought it in a hardware shop. Of course, no one believed his story.

The Kid spent the next eighteen months side-stepping a match with Roberts, who was being carefully nursed along by Terry. During this year and a half Roberts fought every possible contender for the title—nine in all. He won all his fights with knock-outs in the first round. It was a bit strange, almost uncanny, the ease with which Roberts would put his antagonists to sleep. Suddenly, in what seemed like a tame interchange of jabs, the jaw of his opponent would snap back, his knees crumple—and what, a second before, had been a slashing fighter had become a lifeless bundle of flesh.

Roberts' powerful punch in the ring was especially surprising because he showed no sign of it in training. All his sparring partners said he was a light hitter, and they never bore any marks of punishment. In fact, they usually seemed to give more than they got. They admitted Roberts was a beautiful boxer, fast and graceful. But they were more mystified than we sports-writers (Continued on page 91)

# The Picture That Came to Life

*Had the portrait of Camille been stolen? Until Rops took a hand, it had occurred to no one that the heroine of the world's greatest love story might have had need of it herself*

By Eustache Rops  
Celebrated French Detective

I AM a detective, and not an investigator of psychic phenomena. At no time throughout an active career have I paid the least attention to the occult, though Heaven knows Paris is of all capitals the one in which strange cults flourish most successfully. I have regarded the mystics as being half crazy, and their crimes—should they be guilty of any—as being fit stuff for priests and physicians to handle. As a materialist by temperament and training, the subject failed to interest me, that's all.

But I am intolerant on only one point. I abhor the type of mind so blinded by prejudice that it will not admit the reality of a new experience. My five senses have served me faithfully in the past, and whatever they record I am willing to study dispassionately. That is why I have decided to tell the story of this case, though my colleagues in the detective profession will be likely to think it merely proves that I have been sampling a rare brand of absinthe.

A few months ago, I received a telephone call from Madame Bertrande du Puy Dome, the widow of a member of the Chamber of Deputies whose patronage had helped me greatly in my early days. I had not seen her since her husband's death, however, ten years before.

"My house was broken into by burglars last night," she said. "A valuable painting was stolen. Will you come right over?"

Naturally, I obeyed the summons, though my private practice among statesmen and world financiers is large, and I have long since graduated from handling what seem like mere police cases.

On arriving at the Du Puy Dome *hôtel* in the Passy quarter, I was at once admitted into a living room with an unusually high ceiling. The atmosphere of the place was gloomy, almost medieval, what with the dark-colored, cluttered furniture and the thick carpet of a blue so somber that it would have passed for black. The windows were draped with heavy velvet curtains through which the light of day filtered dimly. I could make little of the many paintings on the walls, especially as they also were provided in the most old-fashioned manner imaginable with velvet side-drapes.

I waited in an uncomfortable straight-backed chair, and when Madame came in I arose and bowed over her thin hand.

"At least, you haven't suffered a wholesale looting," I murmured.

"No, no!" she answered. "Only one picture was taken. It was cut from its frame. That one over there. Haven't you noticed?"

She turned on the electric light and pointed to the far wall, opposite the windows. I then observed a massive gold frame, which enclosed a background of dark canvas. Against the latter was the full-length sil-



*I took the trinket from my pocket and offered it to her*

houette of a woman's figure. I gazed up at it intently.

Apparently, the painted figure had been lifted out, after a sharp knife had been run around its outline, and in its place the dirty gray wall stared starkly at us.

"This is rather extraordinary," I said. "Picture thieves are in the habit of removing the whole canvas, flush with the frame; it's easier to roll and to transport safely. And a

I don't see how the fellow managed to climb up there. The painting is hung at least fifteen feet from the floor. A ladder would be required to reach it. Bits of furniture might have been piled on top of each other to get the same result, of course. Were there any signs of that having been done?"

"No," replied Madame. "Not a stick of furniture was found disarranged. There's a step ladder in the cellar. The burglar might have carried it upstairs and then taken it back to where he'd found it. But that does not seem likely. We heard no strange sounds during the night."

I SHRUGGED my shoulders. "Well, kindly have the ladder brought now. I wish to check up on the damage done."

Aided by another servant, the butler called by Madame du Puy Dome made considerable noise and put a deal of effort into the job of dragging a ponderous step ladder from the floor below and setting it in place. I needed no further evidence to convince me that it had not been used by the robber. How, then, had he gone about the theft? Was it possible that he had been able to work thus neatly with a razor blade at the end of a pole?

My mind busy with speculations along this line, I mounted the steps until I had reached the level of the picture frame. Only then did it dawn upon me that I was dealing with a mystery without parallel in my professional experience.

There had been no theft. The female figure had not been cut from the canvas. Instead, the painted body had faded in the most singular fashion. It had not merely become paler. The color had been literally drenched out of it. This was true of what had formerly been a pronounced black or white, no less than of the pink of the cheeks. The paint seemed desiccated, reduced to a uniform corpse-like gray. The very lines and curves of the form had gone flat. By looking closely, one could tell that it had once been a woman's portrait, but when I withdrew my face even a few inches I again had the illusion that the wall had been laid bare.

I passed my finger-tips over the paint. It was solid enough to the touch. Then I examined it under my pocket magnifying glass and could find nothing wrong with it, except that I had never before seen so utterly colorless a substance. Slowly, I descended the ladder and stood before Madame.

"Had you noticed anything strange about the picture?" I asked. "Had it appeared to be deteriorating in recent weeks?"

"OH, not at all!" she answered. "It was in splendid condition. A man from Colin's, the art gallery, was here trying to buy it from me for a hundred thousand francs, only a few hours before it was stolen."

It was on the tip of my tongue to tell her that—whatever else might have happened—it had not been stolen. But I restrained myself. I had begun to find the mystery fascinating, and I feared that a knowledge of the fact I had just discovered might cause her to decide she had no need of me. I wanted to look into the matter of the man from Colin's. Crooked art dealers had perhaps devised a way in an impression of a painting, which left the original of color. It might yet prove that I was on the trail

of a crime. The man's reputation should be investigated.

"You say you heard no suspicious sounds during the night. What makes you so sure there was a burglar in the house?" I demanded.

"That front window. It was forced open."

I moved over to one of the tall French windows looking on the street. Plainly, it had been violated from the outside with chisel and hammer. The intruder had climbed a fence and had boldly taken a chance on not being noticed in that tranquil block. But a good deal more interesting were the signs of his hurried flight. A half burned candle lay on the floor, close by the way of exit; a pool of grease had spread around it, and this bore the print of a footstep pointed outwards. Shreds of a dark tweed cloth hung on a hook that stuck from the window. The handle of the latter had caught a gold chain which had broken, and there had fallen to the carpet a locket of antique craftsmanship.

I HAD been the first to notice the locket. I picked it up and opened it. The sole contents was a lock of lustrous black hair, from which there rose the faint perfume of some flower I did not recognize. Without comment, I slipped the trinket into my pocket.

"Have you reported this case to the police, Madame?" I said.

"No. I dislike the ways of the police. I preferred that you should handle it alone."

"Good. Now please do not talk about it to anyone, nor let your servants talk."

"I promise you. And I hope so much that you will get back the picture for me. It is by Courbet, you know, and it is one of the few genuine portraits of Marguerite Gautier, *La Dame aux Camélias*."

"What?" I exclaimed. "The woman from whom Alexandre Dumas

drew the character of Camille in his famous play?"

"The same."

For the past half hour, I had had an uneasy feeling that the affair was a queer one. But at her latest words, I was swept by the most uncanny conviction that I had in some way stepped across the borderland of the real world. It was by no means a detective's hunch that I was on the right track towards solving a mystery. Rather was it a contact with forgotten sorrows—a notion that someone in the room was dead, and yet was able to communicate with me.

I actually thought: "Good God! Suppose Madame du Puy Dome has died, and her ghost has called me here to bedevil me with an optical illusion! Our friends the spiritualists would find nothing impossible in that."

Then I laughed at myself. I saluted Madame and promised her that I would do my best with the case. I would be busy about the city all day, I said, but would return to her house late in the evening.

My conventional sleuthing at the Colin Art Galleries is not worth the telling. The fellow who had tried to buy the portrait of Camille was honest—and this is not a detective story, anyway.

But it does have a bearing on the way things worked out to say that I formed the theory that the intruder would return to the Du Puy Dome home, to search for his locket. The latter was too personal a treasure for him to give it up lightly. And since there had been no police hue and cry after him, he would probably take (Continued on page 62)

"Apparently satisfied, Camille floated up from the floor, drifted to the spot where the frame of her portrait hung and seemed to melt away into the wall.

"I threw myself across the room and switched on the electric light. It took several minutes for me to swallow the almost incredible fact that confronted me—"

*Sewar's great  
tawny head  
thrust itself  
from the rank  
growth*



*Illustrations from the  
Paramount picture, Chang*

By  
Guy Fowler

# The Ghost Tiger

*The natives told the white hunter that the pale  
Lord of the Jungle could be neither trapped nor  
killed. He laughed—but the tiger laughed last*

**S**EWAR, the tiger, flung his sinuous, striped body a dozen feet into the jungle beside the water-trail and landed running, his belly skimming the ground. Where he had been a moment earlier, a twenty-foot python recoiled from the force of the futile blow it had struck. Seldom does the python strike at a tiger, but he almost never misses.

It was the hour before the sinking of the moon when all the beasts of the jungle were moving in the shadows, ready for the kill, eager to eat and to drink. In the blackness of the night startled deer were leaping for their lives; leopards, tigers, wild boars and giant lizards moved stealthily in pursuit of prey. And not far off the leader of an elephant herd trumpeted shrilly.

The thickets parted at the water's edge and the tiger's blood-shot eyes glowed phosphorescent as he paused before he drank. Above him, in the trees, the great gray apes and myriads of monkeys chattered noisily, for they had no fear—

except of the python, which could climb, and the huge horned owl, which could kill their young, then flutter into space on strong wings.

Sewar licked his chops and wheeled silently, sliding into the depths of the rank growth like a gaunt shadow. Scarce thrice his own length had he padded back from the water when he again twisted his body in a lightning movement and sprang from the ground, this time slashing with his paw at a thing that rose beside him with a harsh, snapping sound.

A second time that night had Sewar escaped. This time he had fairly touched the cane trigger of a man-made trap and flung himself away as the heavy door of cut saplings dropped. His deep, ominous cough reverberated through the jungle while he glared with yellow, flaming eyes behind his

A mile away as the kite flies, natives in the little village of Ban Nam Mai heard that hideous sound, for they are forever attuned to the song of the night and, most of all, they listen for the voice of the tiger, which they believe

under guidance of strange spirits. Beside a *wat*, or village temple, in the shadow of a gilded idol of Buddha, a white man heard it, too, and his hand went to the barrel of the elephant gun beside him.

Mounwah, the huntsman, who had been to Delhi and Bombay in his youth, lay near the white man in the temple of Buddha, and he rose on one lean, brown elbow.

"THAT, O my master," he droned in his native jargon, "is Sewar, the ghost tiger. He alone of all the jungle people goes unharmed by bullets."

Phelps, the American, grunted, and there was contempt in the sound.

"We shall see," he said, patting the cold metal of the rifle barrel.

Mounwah, listening to the thunderous silence of the jungle, the hum of insects, the jingle of a waterfall near by, moved his head slowly and spoke again.

"Sewar, O master," he said, "laughs alike at the bullets of the white man, at the traps that spring in the darkness, and at arrows and knives. He goes through the jungle unafraid—for Sewar is a ghost horse, O my master. I know this to be true."

Big, bronzed Jim Phelps rose up on his elbow and peered through the gloom at his guide.

"Ghost horse, Mounwah, be damned. I thought you were civilized."

Mounwah sat on his haunches, native fashion, and his eyes turned upward to the gilded Buddha in whose *wat* they were sheltered by an ageless, unwritten law of the people. All travelers and all strangers are welcome in the temples, whatever be their caste or their faith. There they may take refuge from the jungle and be received in kindness by the priests.

"It is written, master," said Mounwah, presently, "that certain things be true and certain things be untrue, but this we know. There are tigers in the cane that we may kill, and by singeing their beards we may ward off the ghosts. But there are other tigers, O master, that are ghost horses. By this, I mean to say that ghosts ride back and forth upon them through the jungle, and no man may follow, nor may any beast, nor any god, prevail over them. This is truth."

"Umph. Go to sleep," ordered Phelps, grinning evilly. "Your nigger beliefs are silly."

**M**OUNWAH crouched silently, saying nothing, but for a long time he sat there rocking on his haunches, his eyes in the sickly light looking outward to the black thicket, his ears drinking in the strange morning song of the wilderness between the time of the death of the moon and the birth of the sun. And again, but only once, did Mounwah hear the deep cough of Sewar, followed instantly by the trumpeting of a bull elephant, leader of the herd somewhere off in the mountains to the east.

In the morning Phelps and Mounwah took the trail. They followed a band of beaters whose tawny bodies were marked with fantastic blue tattooing. Mounwah had fashioned a *mantra* from thin reeds as protection against the tigers, and Phelps scorned it as he scorned all of his guide's beliefs. Suddenly the natives ahead set up a weird howling, one among them began a monotonous pounding on the drum. It was the signal that they had found a trail.

Their pace quickened and they pushed through the cane down to the water. At a point some distance from the bank, Mounwah halted and pointed to the ground on their right.

"Look, O master," he exclaimed. "The python has been here. He struck and failed, for it was Sewar he attacked."

The brush had been flattened beneath the weight of the great serpent and his route into the morass was clear to the trained eyes of the native, as, indeed, was the scene of the lightning stab in the dark, and the quicker-than-lightning leap of the tiger.

"Well—" Phelps gazed around interestedly—"maybe he'll be in the trap."

"Not Sewar, O wise master," replied the native, his body glistening in the sunlight.

They came then upon the sprung trap, and the white man saw the tiger tracks, the torn undergrowth, and even a few coarse, yellow hairs matted in the bark of the upright saplings. Mounwah leaned on his rifle, watching Phelps as he moved about. Among the natives in the background there

was now uneasy gabble, for they saw Mounwah with his *mantra* and they did not like the look of the white man, stranger to the jungle, who had freely stared upon their idol of Buddha and laughed, and who sought now to lead them against the spirits of their ancient jungle.

Phelps examined the trap and cursed vilely. It

had been badly built, he said, and what is more, he made light of the courage of the hunters.

"You talk of ghosts and let the tigers get away," he said to Mounwah bitterly. "Let me get a sight of this yellow devil you're afraid of—"; His big hand gripped the heavy barrel of his Martini rifle, that would send a long bullet through the thickest hide of the oldest crocodile.

"The white man trumpets his ignorance to the gray monkeys," said a lean, brown hunter to his mate, as he spat the juice of a betel-nut into the grass.

The others squatted while Phelps, with the assistance of Mounwah, set about to repair the trap.

By day, except for the monkeys and the birds, the jungle is asleep—but ever with a nose up, the wind, an eye to the mouth of the cave, and an ear prepared to hear the least suspicious sound. It was so now as Phelps worked. Above, on the grassy flats that intervened between the higher forest, a herd of deer ranged quietly, and the little beasts of the wilderness, the porcupine and all his kind, moved freely. But the leopard and the tiger, the wild boar, the wolf, and the jackal—these were burrowed in their respective haunts, awaiting the night and the hunting call.

"NOW," said Phelps, when the cane trigger had been reset and the ground properly covered with boughs and fallen cane, "I want no more of this damned ghost nonsense, Mounwah—do you understand? Tell these beaters as I tell you. We want tigers and we're going to get them. You're not being paid to tell foolish stories and let the game escape."

"I will tell my brothers what you say, O master!" Mounwah bowed and there was no expression in his beady, unfathomable eyes.

But there was talk that night in the camp. Few white

"Mounwah," cried the man, falling on his knees, "it is as the spirits told us. Sewar is free. The ghost that rides his back has sprung the trap, and Sewar roams the jungle. O my brother, we are doomed!"

"What's that?" barked Phelps. "Is that damned tiger out of the trap?" He gripped his rifle and—

men have penetrated into that portion of Siam, far in the northeast, and those few have made little impression. Wise or unwise, right or wrong, the natives have their age-old beliefs. And, however much they call to Buddha, the little brown people of the jungle are really spirit-worshippers, and nothing of the civilization brought in by occasional missionaries and white hunters has changed them one particle.

On this night they talked first of Phelps, who was said to believe in the gods of the white men and to possess vast wealth. A great fire burned in a clearing and this was magic, for no beast will come where the red flower grows, not even the fearless Sewar, though he might be driven by hunger, even with a ghost riding his saddle.

In the circle about the blaze sat the elders, and the younger men squatted on their haunches in the rear. The talk was among the graybeards.

"It was handed to me from my father," said one, "and from his father's father in turn, that certain tigers carried spirits on their backs. We have seen Sewar in our day, and it is known to be truth among us that he is charmed. No spear will fly true when it is thrown to bring him low. No poisoned arrow finds him, not from the mightiest bow of our best hunters. Sewar goes freely and fears nothing, my brother—nay, not even the python and his death coil, nor yet the cobra and his sting. How, then, are we to kill Sewar, or capture him for this white stranger? Better, say I, to risk his anger than the anger of the gods."

There were vigorous nods and grunts of approval

of harm will come, for he will not catch Sewar in any trap of cane, with a dog for bait. Yet I do not relish it and——"

His voice died on the air as Phelps strode from his net-covered tent and, by odd jungle coincidence, the hollow, coughing roar of Sewar sounded from the water-hole across the dripping, black jungle.

"Mounwah," called the white man, "in the name of the devil, where are you? What are you black monkeys talking about?"

Mounwah rose swiftly to his feet and bowed. As Phelps came up to him, the fumes of the man's strong drink smote the native sharply.

"We were saying, O master, that you will surely catch the tiger when the moon hangs low. Not the ghost tiger, great master, but another and lesser beast on which no spirit rides."

Phelps laughed without mirth. "You heard that cat a moment ago," he replied. "I think we ought to go out to the trap, Mounwah. Perhaps we have him."

"That would be death," said Mounwah simply, and Phelps recognized that it would be hopeless to even attempt it. The natives would not go.

He and Mounwah had drawn apart from the others, and were standing in the shadows of the village, beneath the thatched huts that rose on stilts and were lost in the gloom of the trees beyond the range of the fire. At the sound of a tom-tom, Phelps turned to look. In the center of a group near the blaze, a young man struck the stretched hide

*The ghost tiger crouched on the edge of the jungle—its body faintly luminous in the brilliant moonlight*



from the elders, while the young men in the rear rank kept silent in their acceptance of wisdom. Mounwah was among the silent ones. He had spoken and it was now his turn to listen. His words, as all the hunters had expected, were but those of Phelps, parroted and interpreted, but his emotions were those of his brothers of the jungle.

"No good will come of hunting the tiger horse," another spoke sagely, "nor yet is it likely, my brothers, that much

lightly with a bone, and from a knot of women in the background came a girl, slender, lithe as an animal, her glossy hair flung in two braids over her shoulders.

Suddenly, as they stepped forward a pace to watch the proceeding, Phelps uttered a sharp exclamation. His eyes widened and his lips fell open.

"Snakes," he said, half aloud. "Great lo those are cobras."  
(Continued)

# A WITNESS from the

*Nelson Cornish thought he saw a way to win  
that all the waters of the world cannot hide*

By  
Edmond Stetson

**A**RLETTE BONDI had seen a phantom. That's what she wrote to me. Had any other girl or woman of my acquaintance made a similar statement, I would have known what to do—laugh.

Yes, I would have accepted it as a rather silly attempt to pique my credulity—some kind of a prank or jest.

But, knowing Arlette as I did—hard-headed, sceptical of even the generally accepted truths, ages older in thought than her twenty years—I couldn't scoff.

Besides, the phantom—so she had written—had been that of Walter Hills, my most intimate friend since boyhood; one with whom, shoulder to shoulder, I had shared both adventure and struggle. And yet I couldn't quite believe she had been correct in her identification of the phantom. Surely he couldn't have passed on without a subtle sixth

sense warning me of his passing. And Arlette had not said he was dead—in so many words—only that she had seen his—

With an impatient shrug I turned from the hotel window, where I had been staring out into the night with unseeing eyes, and lifted her letter, which I had dropped upon the table when my first, hasty reading had sent me into a puzzled daze. Stooping, I held the missive close to the lamp and reread it slowly. This time I must study the meaning of each word of the astonishing document.

MY DEAR EDMOND:

I learned today, through a newspaper, that you are in New York, and where you are stopping. Your return at this time is one of Fate's kindest acts to me. Father and Mother are in Europe. Except for the servants, I am alone here at Rosebriar and in serious trouble. You must come to me—at once—for I need you. I can call upon no other for help, nor share with any but you my awful secret. I fear something terrible has happened to Walter. I haven't seen him for many weeks. Where he went when he left the city, I do not know. Where he is—if alive—I can't even guess.

I have been worried about him for a long time; now I dread the worst. You, who know me so well, who understand that "nerves" never have been one of my weaknesses, must accept my next statement as fact, fantastic as it may appear. A phantom—the phantom of Walter, if I can believe my eyes—has appeared to me here on three successive nights; last night, the night previous, and the night before that.

I am certain it was no earthly presence, for I tried to approach it, talked to it—until it disappeared into nothingness; without speaking.

I am absolutely terrified. I must have someone near me whom I can trust, or I shall go mad. Do not write or telephone. This matter can be discussed only behind closed doors. I know you will come to me; tonight. I shall wait for you.

ARLETTE.

In those hastily scrawled lines I now sensed fully the agony which impelled the girl. There was no word of regret concerning my long absence—no reference to my sudden interruption of our great friendship two years before, when I left the country.

Her mind was held only by its present terror. But there was no doubt that at that moment she wanted to see me more than anyone else in the world. She had asked—almost commanded—that I hasten to

*Midway in a sentence,  
Arlette stopped with a  
frightened gasp*



# Bottom of the LAKE

*the girl he coveted—but he did not know  
the monstrous secret of a friend's treachery*

*As told to  
Edwin A. Goewey*

her side to give help, comfort, and moral support.

I had reached New York, only the day previous, from England. I would have preferred that nothing concerning my return to my native land had been printed, for I intended to tarry but briefly—only sufficiently long to transact some business connected with my holdings in the United States. However, because of certain research work I had done in India and Egypt—discoveries which had been widely chronicled in the press of both Europe and America—the newspapers had not let my arrival pass unnoticed.

Following a night alone at the hotel I had selected for my temporary headquarters, I had left early to attend to my personal affairs, but had not stated where I could be located. A messenger, bearing the mysterious missive, had arrived at the hotel at noon. After waiting many hours, obviously in the hope of delivering it to me in person, he had left it at the desk and departed.

I had not returned until after eight in the evening, when Arlette's letter was placed in my hands. The amazement I felt at recognizing her handwriting was intensified when I noted on the corner of the envelope, "Personal, Important," penned in large letters.

I hastened to my room to give the missive instant attention. No matter what my disappointments in the past had been, any word from her always must be given first consideration. And, when finally I had grasped the full significance of her letter—even though I couldn't credit it *in toto*—I immediately determined to do all that she asked.

Rosebriar was the summer home of Arlette's father, Caesar Bondi, the famous international banker. He had purchased it during my absence from America. I never had visited the place, but, knowing it was located on the outskirts of a fashionable residential hamlet some miles above the great city, on the east bank of the Hudson river, I was confident I could locate it, even at night and alone. The circumstances cited in Arlette's letter—the thought that I, too, might see the phantom, or whatever it was, which had plunged the girl into a fever of terror—made it imperative that I take no one along to guide me, not even an intimate friend.

My nature was one which made me rather sceptical of things of an occult nature. Yet, in my travels in distant lands, I had seen things which I had been unable to explain by any hard-headed reasoning. Therefore, I was torn between doubts and fears, while I debated as to the speediest way to reach Rosebriar. Quickly, I decided to make the journey by automobile. Telephoning the desk, I directed that a fast car be brought around immediately from the hotel garage for my use. I added I would do my own driving.

When I took my place behind the wheel of the car, a significant remembrance flashed through my brain. It was in the same locality in which Rosebriar was situated that Irving had located the fantastic adventures of Ichabod Crane and the Headless Horseman. Perhaps, in the matter-of-fact present, the *outré* doings of these bizarre characters were being discounted by actual happenings of a ghostly

nature. I had Arlette's word for it that such was the case.

The thought only spurred my impatience. I swung into the heavy traffic. My task was a difficult one, for it was a long time since I had driven in New York. And the necessity of keeping my mind absolutely upon working my way through what appeared like never-ending lanes of cars, drove from my mind the supernatural menace that hung over my adventure until I had left the city proper and actually was speeding northward along the broad highway skirting the river.

But, when thoughts of Arlette's strange message again forced themselves into my brain, I was able to reason more calmly than at



*"Ed,"  
the weird  
voice  
gasped,  
"find the  
paddle  
of my  
canoe."*

any time since receiving her letter. And it wasn't long before I became convinced that the answer to the riddle—provided she actually had seen Walter's phantom—lay in the closely knit pasts of him, the girl, and myself. And then there was Nelson Cornish. He, like Walter and me, had been a suitor for Arlette's hand. Perhaps I would learn that he, too, was in some way concerned in this weird happening.

**W**ALTER was a handsome, athletic fellow, popular with men and women alike, but a bit irresponsible, frequently getting into trouble by following the unwise leads of others. However, like myself, his parents possessed great wealth, and he indulged his whims and fancies to the limit, always laughing aside my pleadings that he devote himself to some useful purpose.

Though a bit younger than I, he had been my chum since our small-boy days, and we had gone to the same university. It was while we were home on a college vacation that we first met Arlette. And from that time, whenever we were in the city, we engaged in a good-natured rivalry for her favor, though neither of us was seriously in love—right then. After we were graduated, he accompanied me to the other side,

Arlette. Ever afterward, I regretted this. For, as Walter and I had done immediately upon our home-coming, he fell deeply in love with her. And, though considerably her senior, he pressed his suit as ardently as did we, who were near her age.

The three-cornered rivalry continued throughout the summer. Then—I don't recall exactly what caused the conviction—I became certain that Walter stood highest in her favor. In every way he showed he was desperately infatuated—that, for the first time in his life, he had found something upon which to center his whole interest and affection.

Then I took a radical step—perhaps, a foolish one. I loved the lad so sincerely that I was even more anxious for his happiness than my own. And, fearful that, should Arlette refuse him, he lacked the stamina to recover from the shock of disappointment and would give way utterly to his weaker side and become a hopeless drifter, I withdrew from the lists.

It was a hard thing to do, for I loved Arlette deeply; more than I ever could love another woman. Realizing I could not give a satisfactory explanation for the act I contemplated—either to her or to my friend—I made plans to leave the country for a time without telling anyone. One day, when Cornish had gone to Blue Rocks, and Arlette and Walter were absent together on a motor trip, I boarded a steamer and departed for Europe. That left the field to my chum and Nelson. There was nothing I could do to help Walter further. He would have to play his own game against his old rival.

Suddenly I was snapped from my reverie by a realization that for some minutes no other automobile had passed me. I looked back. No lights there. I was alone on the highway. The circumstance brought surprise. This was a main thoroughfare, stretching one hundred and fifty miles. And, until I had temporarily forgotten my mission while my thoughts were wandering over the past, I frequently had encountered machines.

I cut the pace of my car to a mere crawl and flashed my searchlight along the sides of the roadway. Almost immediately I located

what I suspected I would find—a sign reading, "Road under construction—detour."

The arrow pointed in the direction from which I had come. Cursing my folly for permitting my thoughts to stray at a time when I should have been exercising my utmost faculties, I halted the machine and debated my next move. There was every reason why I should make the greatest possible speed. To turn back would mean a delay, perhaps a serious one if the detour was a considerable distance back.

Though the road ahead was certain to be torn up, it still might be passable for one willing to proceed with care. I decided to risk the chance. If only a comparatively short portion was rough, I would cross it slowly, then increase my



*"Look out, Ed!" Cornish shrieked. "It's coming again! It's behind you!"*

where I put what I had learned of ancient history and archeology to use.

It was on the way over that we became acquainted with Cornish. He was a man of unlimited means, in his early thirties. Already, he had achieved a considerable fame as a big-game hunter and explorer. He was not the type with whom many persons became intimate. For, despite his well-moulded features, the cold, hard look in his eyes and his habit of smiling only with his lips made most persons fear and dislike him.

Prolonged acquaintance, however, overcame the unfavorable impressions Walter and I entertained at first. And, after many jungle adventures, in which he proved his nerve and skill, we became quite fond of him. When we returned to America, we were his guests at Fernwood Lodge, near Blue Rocks, in the lower Catskill Mountains, and we entertained him in New York, where we introduced him to

speed. This promised less loss of time than to turn back, locate the detour, and proceed—heavens knows how far—over one of the hill roads. Starting the car, I turned my searchlight on full, and pointed it directly ahead, moving cautiously. A quarter mile was covered, then a half and—my plan went glimmering. A string of red lanterns came into view, and within a few seconds I was halted definitely by a stretch of wooden barriers completely blocking further progress.

In a final and forlorn hope, I swung my light wide, praying I would discover a place where the workmen's carts had made their way beside the roadway, which stretched into the blackness a mass of heaped stones, I did even better. I located something which caused me to utter a cry of joy. To my right, running through a sweep of pasture land up the side of a hill, was a narrow dirt road. Leaping out, I bent and examined it. There were wheel tracks. My guess was that it led to the same road I would have encountered if I had followed the regular detour. It was steep and badly rutted, but I believed I could follow it and save myself much delay. To decide was to act. I swung the car and in second speed began the climb, jolting and swaying crazily, but making progress.

Reaching the top, I turned into a fairly level stretch, but the road appeared to twist every hundred feet—finally arriving at a point where it branched into three narrow thoroughfares. The condition of these convinced me I had not yet reached the main detour. But, confident of my sense of direction, I kept on into the middle one. Slowly but surely the trees along the edges increased in number until at last I was in a dense wood traversing what was little more than a pathway, too narrow to permit me to turn round. Groaning over my predicament, I kept moving, hoping for the best. Then I came out into a clearing, with tree-stumps on every side. My lights showed other roads leading off in many directions.

I realized I was lost—completely; and back in the hills where there wasn't one chance in a million that anyone would come along and set me right. If, in an effort to locate a farmhouse, I became further entangled in the woodland, I might not be able to work my way out until long after daylight came.

My helplessness made me frantic. Arlette was waiting for me. What would she think, because of my failure to heed her plea? And yet, what could I do? There was just a chance I might retrace my course, locate the main highway, and find the regular detour. It meant hours of delay. But anything was better than remaining there motionless.

Hoping that the desperate experiment would be successful, I climbed back into the car, grasped the wheel, and set the motor whirring. But, just as I was about to put the car in motion, I received a jolt which all but forced me to cry out with fright. For out of a road to my right, in the full glare of my searchlight, appeared a car, its lights blazing with a strange, greenish glow, and moved slowly across the clearing. It had but a single occupant, its driver. Recovering my wits, I shouted to him. He paid no heed,

probably did not hear me. I thought. His car turned. I caught the glare of the tail-light, the reddest I ever had seen. Obviously, the chauffeur knew his way out of these hills. And, desperately anxious that he should pilot me back to civilization, I shot on the gas and made after him. At times I gained upon the red light; at others I fell back a bit. But, though I sounded my horn repeatedly, in an effort to attract his attention, the driver ahead never slackened his speed.

**T**HEN, with a suddenness which sent me cold all over, while my trembling fingers momentarily slipped from the wheel, I realized that the car ahead was making no sound, that there was no hum of the motor, no rasping of the gears such as I made repeatedly when compelled to shift hurriedly because of many dangerous obstacles and changes in the grade.

Perhaps, because of the fearful loneliness of the place—or, more likely, because my thoughts had been directed toward the supernatural, by Arlette's strange letter—I began to believe the car ahead was not material, that its driver was not human. I tried to fight down the idea, but failed. And, the more convinced of this I became, the greater grew my fears. However, I somehow managed to hold sufficient control of my nerves to trail the car ahead, hoping against hope that it would lead me back to the main highway.

And it did. We swung sharply to the right and began descending a steep hill, gaining speed despite my efforts to control the car with the brakes. In what appeared but seconds, though it probably was several minutes, we swerved from the trees out upon a stretch of macadam beyond which I caught the glint of moonlit water through openings in the foliage. I shouted for joy. Surely, this must be the main road.

I fancied the driver ahead was increasing the speed of his car. Probably he was striving to lose me

before I could learn more about him. Anger swept away my fright. Cursing and yelling, I pressed my foot upon the accelerator. My machine fairly leaped ahead. Foot by foot it gained upon the other. We swung into a bit of open roadway, brilliant beneath a moon riding directly overhead. My car was almost beside the other when its driver turned and looked over his shoulder, and I caught his face full.

God, what a shock! I'll never forget it as long as I live. For the face into which I gazed was that of Walter Hills—but white, ghastly, unearthly.

In the agony of the moment my foot slipped from the accelerator, my car lost speed, and the other forged ahead. Then a feeling of questioning wonderment swept all fear from me. If it had been Walter I had seen, had he recognized me? And, if he had, why was he trying to escape? No, it couldn't have been my old friend, unless—

My half-numbered brain was beginning to reason. Like Arlette, I had seen a phantom; and the specter had been that of Walter Hills. It had appeared in the maze of the hilltop forest to lead me to my des- (Continued on page 51)



"There's no one there," I said. "It was only the storm"

# PHANTOM PERFUMES

*What would YOU do if the scene outside your window changed suddenly to a landscape you had never seen? Phoebe Sands, struggling for her birth-right of happiness, learned that no one—not even the dead—is above suspicion*

By Ethel Watts Mumford

THE old mansion stood on a little eminence, shadowed by towering elms and rock-maples. Its plain Georgian front looked down to the main road, across a long slope of what had once been lawn. The narrow double-galleried porch at the back commanded a great sweep of farm-dotted valley, encircled by cradling hills that seemed to enfold the quiet spot lovingly.

Key in hand, Phoebe Sands walked around the house. Her suit-case lay on the stone slab before the front door, but as yet she had not entered into her kingdom. She wanted to comprehend it all, to realize that this was hers—this—her inheritance. Peace, beauty, security—all hers.

There was no tinge of sadness in her ecstasy of possession, not even when she passed the little enclosure where two mossy headstones recorded the names of her Great-aunt Aurelia and her Great-uncle Stephen. Aunt Cornelia, their only daughter, was not buried beside them. Phoebe did not know where the body of her benefactress reposed. She had never seen her Aunt Cornelia. The separation between the members of the family had been complete. Aunt Cornelia had clung to the home town, and her brother's determination to seek the golden West had met with her strong disapproval.

BUT, as the twilight of life had merged into the night of death, she had remembered that blood was blood and that her brother's marriage out in California had resulted in the continuance of the honored strain. Therefore, her will—a lean, hard document without even the color of affectionate hypocrisy—had left her wide acres and her tiny income to "Phoebe Sands, daughter of my deceased brother, Milton Sands."

Phoebe's young, adventurous heart had responded eagerly to this call of a home in far-away New England. For this was romance—Cinderella's mice and pumpkin turning into coach and six. Pride in her blood, her family, her heritage, entered her heart, now that she stood in the shadow of the ancestral walls. "My land, my people, the home of my people—it belongs to me and I am part of it."

The thrill of ownership deepened as at length she thrust the key into the lock and turned it deliberately, savoring the moment.

The sunlight leaped into the silent hall, throwing her slim shadow sharply on the worn oak flooring. The entry ran straight through to the Dutch door at the back that gave out onto the porch. To left and right opened great rooms. Solid shutters made them dark, but through the gloom Phoebe Sands could distinguish the shapes of a huge sofa, a desk-bureau, an oblong table surrounded by chairs, drawn up as if for a committee meeting of ghosts.

Light! She wanted to see the sunshine flooding in. This dusk in broad daylight was forbidding. She forced up the

heavy iron hooks that secured the shutters of the nearest window and, exerting all her strength, thrust them back against the outer walls, where they jarred, with a whack, against the clapboards. A heavy smell of box swept into the room. The next window gave to her hand. Then she caught her breath sharply.

What was this? She found herself looking out upon a little lake with lily-pads dotting its polished surface, a lilac hedge, a path leading to the water, with unclipped box bushes outlining its length and willow trees in the far distance! Surely, in her wanderings about the grounds, she had seen no such place as this! She closed her eyes for a moment and gazed again. Two white butterflies were fluttering over the walk; a fish jumped in the pond, sending a crinkle of rings to the farther marge. These windows must be in an ell, she reasoned. This was a part of the grounds she had not visited.

She turned her back on the disturbing landscape and looked within the room. Now she saw the heavy, old-fashioned furniture in detail—rugs rolled, tied, and wrapped in newspapers lay against the baseboard; pictures, covered with pink mosquito-netting, adorned the walls. She noted her own footprints outlined in the dust that lay heavy on the floor.

The scent of box was overpowering! Strange, she had seen none outside! Now the window next to the fireplace yielded to her efforts. It must open upon the side lawn and the picket enclosure of the graves, she reasoned. Blinding sunlight rushed in. Shading her eyes, she stared before her. There was a garden, bright with flowers, and a high hedge with a little gate, beyond which she glimpsed feathery rows of carrots and the purple-red of beet tops. A sparkle of water, where the pond turned, glinted in the distance.

CLINGING to the sill, she leaned out. To the right the grass grew long under the branches of apple trees. It was a big orchard, for in orderly ranks it climbed a rise and marched on over it. A soft murmur of anxious bees filled the air and the scent of box lay over all.

Phoebe drew back. Certainly no orchard grew upon this elm-and-maple-planted knoll. There was no pond with willows at its brink, no box hedges, no bee-inviting garden. This was an illusion, a dream, or else the outside world she had left was utterly changed.

Hardly knowing what she did, she turned and ran, stumbling, outside the open door to the three wide granite steps before it. She glanced back at the windows of the drawing-room. They were wide open, their shutters resting against the house, and it was from these very windows that she had looked upon a lily-dotted pond and seen two white butterflies fluttering above a box-enclosed walk! This was madness! Below her fell the easy descent of the lawn till it met the highway. Maples bordered it. On either side great elms

rose and drooped their fine foliage above the roof.

Steadying herself along the wall, she reached the corner of the house and stood beside that other opened window from which she had seen lush grass and the ranks of apple trees. The scent of box no longer assailed her with its aromatic fragrance. Instead, there was the perfume of peonies in their bed along the stone foundation. Between the elms she could see the edge of the iron pickets that guarded the sleep of Stephen and his wife, Aurelia.

She was not frightened; fear was absent from this strange experience. It never for a moment entered her head that she could not spend the night there, as she had planned to do. She told herself that she was simply overtired. Like all modern young women, she had a smattering of science. The "sub-conscious mind," she knew, was quite capable of any freak. If one were very tired—and she was tired—

For days and nights she had been traveling. She had come straight through from California to Stonevale and, being unused to trains, she had slept but little.

Defiantly, she turned to the front door, took up her suit-cases, set them inside, and entered the drawing-room; and, still defiant, crossed to the window.

The strange pictures were no longer there. The view corresponded to what she knew lay without. Gone were the willows and the pond. No smell of box hung on the air. Each window framed its proper outlook.

There were no apple trees and no old-fashioned garden.

The sun was gliding down the sky toward the horizon. Soon night would come. She whistled a little tune as she found a lamp half full of oil and lit it. She had been informed where to find linen and blankets. In her suit-case was a comfortable packet of emergency food. She would light a fire. She would take possession—yes, possession. Again that wonderful sense of ownership and of oneness with the past came over her. She was at home! The house itself was telling her. This was her home, now and as long as she should live.

Morning found her up with the larks to greet it. She had slept refreshingly in the antique low-post bed, between the heavy linen sheets under the hand-woven blankets. She had contemplated her reflection in the wavy green mirror that hung above a massive chest of drawers in her bedroom

and, with a giggle, pulled back her rebellious black hair into a hard knot, trying to imagine herself in a gray print wrapper. She must dress the part of a New England spinster, she decided, though her only experience of the type was of the theatrical variety. The pulled back hair could not dim the beauty of the soft oval of her face and her great, black eyes defied New England and all its works.

There was very little left from her last night's supper and she found that the telephone, the one concession to modernity in the place, was disconnected.

"What to do? What to do?" she inquired of the empty air as she twirled her hat on one finger. "Not a house in sight — milk — eggs — bread — the village two miles away." Walk? She was without a pair of sensible shoes till the arrival of her trunk. Well, people in country places always gave one another a "lift." She'd go down to the road and intercept the first village-going car. She slapped on her hat and ran down the path to the stone horse-block, where she

settled herself, her feet swinging.

She had not long to wait. A roadster rounded the bend and came toward her with slackening speed as if it anticipated the appeal of her upraised hand. It was driven by a young man whose intent blue eyes seemed to catch and hold her own even from the first moment of his appearance. He compelled attention not only by the brilliant magnetism of his turquoise-colored eyes, but by his whole appearance. His hair, uncovered to the morning,

glinted with high lights. His body filled the space behind the wheel with easy grace, but it was his sudden smile that set her heart beating. From him came a calm greeting, "Hello, Phoebe Sands!"

"Yes, I'm Phoebe Sands," she admitted, somewhat taken aback, "and also, who are you?"

"I'm Clinton Wade. Thought you might want a lift to town. Am I right?" He opened the door.

"You must be a mind reader," she said as she settled herself.

He grinned at her. "I have to be. It's important self-protection, you see. You're my Hereditary Enemy."

He started the car before she could formulate her puzzlement.

"Hereditary Enemy?"

He frowned quizzically. "Didn't the old girl leave a



*The scent of box was overpowering! Strange, she had seen none outside!*

course on me? Didn't she warn you against the Wades?"

"If you mean my Aunt Cornelia," Phoebe said testily, "she never said anything to me about you or anybody else. I'm her heir, that's all."

"She never saw you, did she? I wonder——" he broke off meditatively. "You don't look like a Sands at all," he added.

She bridled. "Appearances are deceitful then. But why are you an enemy—what's the joke?"

"No joke about it," he replied seriously. "Your aunt hated my father and mother like poison."

"What in the world for?" she wanted to know. "I didn't know they had feuds in New England."

"You didn't? Well—you're in the line of one. I'm glad it wasn't decided to you."

"But why?" she persisted.

"It isn't nice to say of a lady that she got mad when she was jilted," he observed abstractly.

"Do you mean to say," she cried indignantly, "that your father

You see, I've worked since I was seventeen. Hard work, stores and factories, and to make both ends meet I had to room with other girls—girls that I didn't like sometimes. You can guess what this freedom means to me. It's just heaven."

"You poor kid," he said gently. "You poor kid. Well, you've got your own house now—forget the past." His tone changed to one of gaiety. "And here we are in Stonevale Village. Welcome to our city."

"Stonevale Village," she repeated softly. "Father used to tell me about it." She remained seated in the car, looking up the shaded Main Street with its little colonnaded shops, unchanged since the days when her father was "little Milton Sands," running errands, barefooted and carefree, along its "feather-stitch" brick sidewalks.

"There's the Bank," she whispered. "Red sandstone, just like he said. And there's the Doctor's house beyond, with the iron dogs in the yard. And that's the same name over the General Store: 'Madham Brothers.' Isn't it funny that he never once described his home to me? It was always the Village and the boys and girls he used to play with, but never a word about his house. I wonder why?"

Wade made no suggestion, and she descended from the automobile. He shut off the motor and swung himself to her side.

His own business could wait, he assured her. It wasn't every day that Phoebe Sands came to town and he admitted he had anticipated her coming and had planned to be on hand to help her.

Their presence together seemed to attract surprised comment; evidently, the whole town knew of the feud and had wondered whether Miss Sands had handed on a legacy of hatred with her more solid possessions. There were looks, questioning and smiling—underbrow glances that she caught from the tail of her eye—but her fellow townsmen and women proved most kind and attentive, most cordial in their offers of assistance and hospitality.

"Coming home" — yes, that's what it was—"coming back home."

Her companion, responding to her mood, was sympathetically silent as they drove homeward. She relaxed gently in the warmth of his understanding.

He assisted her with her packages, arranging them as she directed on the pantry shelves—together they investigated the countless cupboards, the quaint ovens, the elaborately hidden back stairs and mysterious ham-closet. She watched him, wondering. Why was he so intent? Why did his face wear that strange expression, as if he listened aching for distant voices? Why did his hands so insistently caress the worn woodwork, his fingers pass with such soft touches over the cracked paneling of the ancient walls? Could it (Continued on page 87)

*He was staring out of the window, his face white, his eyes fixed in a mazed wonder*



jilted my Aunt Cornelia? That wasn't very nice either."

He smiled at her. "Don't blame me. I wasn't there, and now that I know you weren't willed the Hate—I take it all back. Anyway, I'm glad you're here."

"So am I," she spoke with unconscious warmth. "I'm glad you're a neighbor, too. You are a neighbor, aren't you?"

"The neigest sort of a neighbor—just over the hill there," he answered, "and at your service. Who's going to live with you?"

"Nobody," she informed him. "I haven't anyone. I'm all alone on the family tree—the last leaf, so to speak—but I love the idea of being by myself in my very own house.

# VENGEANCE HOUSE

*A dreadful crime had been committed between those walls, and the house demanded, in atonement, the life of one member of each family that came to live there*

By Mrs. P. G. Wiggins

**T**HERE is a shadow on my life that time has failed to vanquish. The memory of the tragedy is yet a raw wound, and I know that the passage of the years can never heal it. Although a little of its deadly mystery has since been explained, there are questions that, for all I know now, may have no worldly answer.

My father was a highly successful physician in Chicago. Our home, naturally, was a place of science rather than of superstition, of sane logic as opposed to unsupported theory. There were four children, and we were as happy a family as might be found anywhere. Thanks to my father's success, our home was a handsome place on an exclusive residential street.

But we had resided in this house only a brief time until it became painfully apparent that there was something peculiar about it. The first warning of this came on a night when my mother went up-stairs to her bedroom to lull my baby brother to sleep. She insisted that when she stepped into the darkened room a footstep sounded, but when she found the electric switch there was complete silence. And when she started to leave the room again in darkness, the footfalls were repeated.

With a startled cry she seized the baby and fled, calling for my father. He ran up-stairs and, on hearing her story, conducted a thorough search of the whole house. The windows in the room were fastened inside and there was but one door. There was no indication anywhere of an intruder.

Father laughed.

"Your imagination is working overtime," he counseled her. "You need a rest, my dear. You're nervous."

A few nights later the occurrence was repeated. Mother did not cry out this time, but ran down the stairs for my father. The electric light above the stairway partly illuminated the hall on the second floor where our bedrooms were. Mother's room was near the front of the house, almost at the end of the hall. It required only a few seconds for father to reach the second floor. Again he made a search, but found nothing.

**H**E was still inclined to blame mother's nerves, but he did have the window locks examined. And, for her benefit, he instructed the corner policeman to watch the house with a particular eye on nights when he was called out to attend patients. Another period of undisturbed peace followed then and we relaxed.

On a night when father was out on a call, we went up-stairs to retire at the usual time. At her door mother stopped, terrified. From her bedroom came the sound of ghostly footsteps! They seemed to cross the floor to the opposite end of the room. She quickly opened the door and switched on the light. The room was empty. Frightened, yet brave, she tried the experiment of turning off the

light and standing with her hand ready at the switch. After a few moments of darkness, she again heard the soft movement and turned on the light. Still the room was the same.

For the balance of the night, until father's return, the lights blazed in our house, above and below.

"Either you're the victim of an hallucination, or there's a secret passage to your room that somebody is using," said father. "If it's a passage, I'm going to find it."

He tapped the floors, the walls, and the ceiling. He went from room to room, and when he returned, there was a smile on his face.

"Your imagination has tricked you again," he decided.

"Well, I don't intend to sleep in that room any more," mother replied.

Thereafter, the room was held in reserve as a guest chamber, and for the most part it was under lock and key. There were occasions in the night when mother and we older children thought we heard footsteps in there, but father told us that if we tried hard enough, we could imagine anything. But when an aunt came to visit us and she, too, emerged from the room in the hours of early morning, mother felt more certain than ever.

"**Y**OU'VE been telling Aunt Emma about your nightmares and she had one herself," father said, laughing. "Now, just to settle this thing for once and all, I'm going to sleep in there myself tonight."

He did stay there two nights—and nothing happened.

But on the third night he was awakened by an exceedingly icy draught, unnaturally chill. He lowered the window, but could not get to sleep. Suddenly he began to suspect his own nerves, for he, too, heard footsteps. And he repeated mother's experience, turning the lights off and on, with the same result.

The next night he tried to sleep there with the baby, but again he was roused and passed through the same harrowing experience. This time he took the baby in his arms and left the room. In the morning he clung to his original theory.

"Your imaginations have been so active that you've made mine a nuisance," he defended himself.

Nevertheless, the furniture was removed from the troubled room and it was locked up completely.

Another brief period passed before mother received her most hideous shock up to that time. She had hung some clothes to dry in the garret, and in the evening started up after them, carrying a candle because the light switch was far from the head of the stairs. My brother and I held the door open so that it would not swing to.

As she was gathering the clothes together, a cold draught extinguished her candle and we heard footfalls on the boarded floor. They seemed to approach from a corner where an

abandoned shaft was located. It had once been used as a dumbwaiter and extended down through the house to the basement.

"Who are you? What do you want?" mother called out.

**N**O answer came, and she started to run in the darkness towards the stairway. The footsteps followed and another sudden gust of damp wind blew the door closed. We heard mother scream, and with our combined strength tried to open the door as we joined our voices in the cry for help.

I remember praying to God and hearing my little brother pleading. It seemed like hours, but as a matter of fact father reached us in a few moments. He was carrying his revolver when he crashed into the dark stairway entrance. He found the switch instantly and in the glare of the lights saw mother on the floor, her face convulsed.

"Oh, please take me away from here," she gasped.

He glanced around the garret and saw nothing out of the ordinary. Then he stooped and picked mother up in his arms. She responded to his treatment after a while and was able to speak.

"When my candle went out," she said, with a great effort, "I heard the footsteps coming towards me. They were so close that I imagined the — the person would reach out and touch me. Then you came up. I am not mistaken, dear. I know."

"Another sudden gust of damp wind blew the door closed. We heard mother scream, and with our combined strength tried to open the door as we joined our voices in the cry for help.

"I remember now praying to God and hearing my little brother pleading. It seemed like hours—"

"Did you see anything?" asked father in anxious tones.

"No. But the person, or whatever it was, came from the old elevator shaft."

So persistent was she and so convinced that she was right that father called in the police. Three officers came in a little while, and with father they made another search of the house. In the basement they found that the entrance to the elevator shaft was heavily boarded.

"She probably heard a rat," suggested one of the policemen.

"But what do you make of these other occurrences?" asked father, describing the weird experiences through which we had passed.

"Umph," said one. "That's strange." They laughed nervously and could offer no explanation.

"You know how women and children are," another offered. "Easily frightened, of course."

**B**UT father was not satisfied. In the morning he renewed his investigation and it netted him a single discovery. He found what appeared to be a trap-door beneath the stairway in the basement. A portion of the ceiling was so arranged that by pressing on it a hinged door opened into a passage beneath the stairs. Following the passageway, he learned that it connected directly with the elevator shaft. It was littered with old papers and boxes, rubbish of all descriptions, as though it had once been used as a place of storage.

There was no indication whatever that the passage had been used recently. The discovery, however, convinced father that there was more to the situation than he had at first believed possible.

"When I'm away," he told mother, "keep the basement and garret doors locked."

A fortnight passed with no disturbance. Then, just when it seemed that mother's shattered nerves were growing steady,

we gathered in the dining room after dinner, where we preferred to spend the evenings. It was a bitter night, one such as Chicago alone is familiar with—a fierce wind howling in from Lake Michigan and snow nearly a foot deep on the level.

Father had attended to the furnace, banking it for the night, and we were comfortable and happy—forgetful, for the time, of our mystery. While we were sitting there, each engaged in something of interest, we heard the unmistakable sound of footsteps in the basement. There was a cement floor down there, and the sound was that of a person who made no effort to conceal his movements.

The furnace door opened and the metal clanged. We heard next the familiar bang of a large poker that hung on the wall near the furnace, as the fire was stirred into new life. Coal was shoveled noisily into the furnace and then the door was closed with a careless crash.

The sounds were so commonplace as to be ludicrous under other circumstances. The poker rattled back in its place and we heard the damper turn, followed by the roaring of the newly fed fire.

The footsteps then came to a spot directly beneath the register about which we were gathered. Next, the damper was opened and a gust of hot air struck us with the force of a wind. We leaped back and away from that fierce heat. Father alone dared to remain, bending over the register with his hand cupped

to his ear, his brows knitted and his mouth tense.

"I'm going down there," he announced sharply, starting towards the kitchen.

"Please!" mother seized his arm and held him.

"No, don't go, father," I cried and the other children joined me.

"Not alone," said mother.

**F**OOTFALLS sounded on the concrete below as though someone were pacing steadily back and forth before the furnace. Father raised his hand, commanding silence, and suddenly we heard the steps mounting the wooden stairway to the kitchen door. Father ran into the adjoining room and reached to the mantel for the revolver he had placed there on his return that evening. It had disappeared.

Turning swiftly, father made for the kitchen and took down a small hand-ax from a peg on the wall. The weird footfalls mounted the stairs. A moment later a heavy blow struck the cellar door, and the knob was rattled viciously. Father stood near with the ax raised, waiting. Mother and the rest of us huddled at the dining room doorway, too terrified to whimper. The blows continued for fully a minute, then ceased.

By this time, we discovered that our neighbors in the adjoining house had been attracted by the noise in the cellar and were staring across the lawn at our house.

Father went to the window and signaled, then raised it and called across to Parker, a lawyer.

"Come over here, will you?" he urged, with no tremor in his voice. "I'm going down the street for a policeman."

"Sorry," Parker called back. "Mrs. Parker is so nervous I can't leave her. I'll see if I can get a policeman, though—maybe I can call one from the front door."

In a few moments he returned, advising father in an excited tone that the police were coming on the run.

Two men arrived then and started immediately for the cellar. Evidently, they had called for others before coming to the house, because while they were in the basement three more officers rushed in.

They found the furnace roaring dangerously and all the draughts were open. But there was no sign of an intruder and every window was securely locked on the inside. Father told them about the secret door and the passageway, but when they searched there, it served only to deepen the mystery.

Standing about with drawn guns, the police presented a helpless appearance as the strange search neared its end.

"If anyone was hidden in there," said the officer in command, "he got out between the time you called us and our arrival. You're sure there's no other way out—"

"Positive," father assured him.

Two officers were detailed to remain for the night, and the others finally went away. Father was standing with them in the cellar. One of the men suddenly leaned down and studied the floor.

"What's this?" he demanded, pointing to a broken spot in the flooring, nearly hidden in the gloom of a corner. A closer examination revealed that at some time the floor had been torn up and later repaired.

The cracks had been re-cemented and now were barely discernible. They extended several feet in one direction and about half as far in another, in the form of a grave.

"It looks like a plumber has been working here," suggested the other policeman.

"There's something queer about the place, though," continued the first.

"Several families have lived here since the owner left and not one of them ever stayed long. We've had calls here before, but never could find anything out of the ordinary."

"Well, how do you account for my revolver having been stolen?" father asked, abruptly. "I left it on the mantel before dinner and when this noise started, the gun was gone."

"You are sure you put it there?"

"Come up and I'll show you exactly where I put it."

They went to the parlor and father led the way to the mantel. He looked startled at first, then completely mystified. The revolver lay where he had left it. The officers smiled.

"It looks to me like you people are all excited," said one. Father shook his head and could offer no explanation.

The balance of the night was quiet. In the morning, Mrs. Parker came over.

"My husband saw an enormous cat jump out of a pipe on the side of your house," she told mother. "Could it have been that, do you think?"

"No cat could make the sort of noise we heard," replied mother.

Mrs. Parker looked troubled and was ill at ease.

"Do you know," she said presently, after an uncomfortable pause, "I had such a horrible dream about you last night. I'm just sick about it." She looked sharply at mother. "Is the baby all right?"

"Yes, perfectly," answered mother.

"Well, my dream was about him. I thought—oh, it was a frightful dream."

But she suddenly recalled a duty she had to perform and went away without recounting her dream.

When father came home, he announced that we were to move to a new location.

"I don't exactly like the way the Parkers act about this," he told mother. "It seems to me they know more than they're telling."

"I thought that, too," mother replied.

Later, father discussed the matter with Parker and a rather heated discussion was the result.

"You know as well as I do that no cat caused that disturbance," father argued.

"Well, I saw a cat jump out of the pipe," said Parker. "And I know that other people living here have been disturbed by a cat. What do you expect of me? I can't explain it any more than you can."

From various neighbors in the course of the next few days mother learned of strange incidents that had occurred in the house in past years, although no one could trace them to any

definite source, nor could anyone explain the mystery.

"I planned to buy this place and make it our permanent home," father said, disconsolately to mother. "But I wouldn't have it now at any price."

"No," she agreed. "It's spoiled as a home for us now."

That night the baby suddenly acquired a fever, and mother and father were awake until daylight, working over him. By morning the child had a well-developed case of whooping cough.

When Mrs. Parker learned of it, her face went ghastly white.

"Oh," she cried, half sobbing, "I knew it—after that dream—"

"Come, come," mother remonstrated with her. "There's nothing serious about it." (Continued on page 76)



"God forgive me!" Mrs. Parker cried.  
"If I had told you, your little baby would still be alive—"

# How I FORETOLD the

*The King of the Belgians wanted to know when was happening in his capital, thousands of miles*

By Cheiro

*The World-Famous Seer*

**H**ISTORY has by now lined up faithfully the foibles and the follies, the shrewdness and the calculating cleverness in finance and diplomacy, of Leopold II, King of the Belgians.

I had the honor of reading his hand and revealing to him his length of years. It was an interesting experience, for Leopold, whom Edward VII dubbed "Spadebeard," was a complex man as well as a versatile monarch.

Circling around my memories of Leopold must of necessity come the recollection of two women, with both of whom his name was associated: the Baroness Vaughan, hismorganatic wife, and sparkling Gaby Deslys, the Parisian music hall beauty with whom Leopold flirted in kingly fashion.

It was while fulfilling a Parisian season, working hard from morn till eve in disposing of the long list of clients who thronged my consulting-room, that one evening about six o'clock I was feeling quite fagged out and I said to my secretary that I would see no other callers.

Judge of my astonishment when a few minutes later a tall, commanding-looking gentleman walked unceremoniously into my room. I was about to tell him brusquely that the hour was impossible for a consultation, when he interrupted me.

"Cheiro," he said, and I noted that his voice was that of a man accustomed to command and be obeyed, "you must not be angry with your secretary. I pushed by him rather unceremoniously, I am afraid."

"I have to make rules," I returned a little stiffly. "Otherwise——"

"'Otherwise' you would be worn out."

He sat himself down in the chair reserved for consultations and threw back the long cloak he wore. I then saw he was in evening dress. Something in his face seemed strangely familiar—his long beard and saturnine face, with the strangely cold blue eyes that I saw were watching me closely. While I was striving to "place" him, he spoke again.

"You read the hand of King Edward when he was Prince of Wales, I believe?"

It was true. For as long as I live, I shall

*"I had stumbled upon one of the most curious of Royal hobbies."*



never forget my momentous interviews with the Heir-Apparent, as he then was. But I wondered what on earth this

imperious stranger was going to interrogate me about. Was he some secret agent of the Court, or——

"I have been interested in what he told me the last time I met him here in Paris. Do you know me, Cheiro?" and with this he stared fixedly at my perplexed face.

Then in a flash I *knew*. For, of course, at that time there was not a kiosk upon the boulevards but carried its assortment of pictures of my visitor. I was face to face with His Majesty, Leopold Philippe Victor, Ruler of Belgium, whose frequent visits to Paris had rivaled even those of Don Carlos of Portugal.

I bowed low. Instantly he put me at my ease.

"No ceremony, I beg," he said, and offered me a cigar. "The truth of the matter is, Cheiro, I want to consult you. But I cannot do so now. When can you come to Laeken Palace? Today is Thursday; I leave tomorrow for Brussels; can you come Saturday at six in the evening?"

With kings, to hear is to obey. Full up though I was with engagements, I decided to cancel them at once. The magnetic personality of this monarch, at the time the most talked-of king in Europe, gripped me with intense fascination.

"Good," he said at length, after I had mapped out my movements. "I shall expect you Saturday at six. Take this." He placed a card in my hand. "Present it to the officer of the guard and you will be admitted without question." And with this he strode out of the room.

I must confess I was pleasurablely excited by the coming visit. I was gratified, too, at the knowledge that King Edward had spoken so warmly of my work; for while I was in the library of Marlborough House with His Highness, I had striven to unveil to him as far as possible the mysterious science of prevailing numbers whereby dominating dates in a life may be predicted and "fatal days" avoided.

I made a fast journey from Paris and arrived in the Belgian capital in ample time to keep my appointment. I found Laeken a fine-looking palace,

originally an old chateau but now very much modernized, and surrounded by

# Fates of GREAT MEN

he would die. The Shah of Persia asked what away. And, amazingly, Cheiro made good

beautiful woods. I made my way to the main entrance, was stopped by the guard, handed over to an officer, and quickly found that the card given me by the King was an open-sesame. On the stroke of six I was seated in a small room plainly furnished and really not unlike a hotel sitting-room.

Suddenly one of the inner doors opened and His Majesty appeared. He was dressed very simply in a morning coat and was smoking his eternal cigar. He bade me come in to his study and quickly made me feel quite at home. For some minutes the conversation turned upon the British Royal Family. One remark I can repeat as it was so shrewd: "When King Edward has his 'head' in foreign affairs, he will be a big surprise. He is a born diplomat." He also made some penetrating remarks upon the character of the Duke of York, now King George V. I was amazed to see how the Belgian King had evidently studied various Royal personages.

I had expected to be immediately called upon to give His Majesty a demonstration of the art of the occult. But to my surprise he suddenly said:

"You are hungry; you must have something to eat."

I protested that I required nothing.

"Nonsense," he replied, getting up and touching a bell. In response to the ring a servant appeared.

"Kitchen!" was the curt word, and the servant vanished. This servant, by the way, was an ex-guardsman, a Scotsman, who had been for some years in the service of Leopold.

"Come with me," said the King, rubbing his hands.

I followed him into a small kitchen, wonderfully fitted up with every device for cookery, and entirely dominated by the comforts of electricity.

"Now," said King Leopold, "I shall show you how to make an Irish stew." As he said this—and I must confess I thought my ears deceived me—he laughed his peculiar sardonic croak, and repeated in commanding tones that had a touch of

foreign intonation: "I will show you how to make an Irish stew—just as they have them over in Erin."

Now, I have lived in Ireland and consider myself rather an expert in stews. But I certainly was not prepared for the gastronomic exhibition that followed, and incidentally I may reveal that I had stumbled upon one of the most curious Royal hobbies.

On a small table were the ingredients ready for a stew, and, going up to these, His Majesty commenced to mix them, throwing them into a stewpan as he did so, and evidently quite pleased with himself.

It was while he was earnestly engrossed with the task of making the stew that I was entertained—I hope the expression is not disrespectful—to learn that the King of the Belgians often cooked and served his own meals.

"I am so tired of the elaborate dishes cooked by my chef," he told me, "and have no intention of digging my grave with my teeth. Therefore, some time ago I thought out the idea of doing some cooking myself. I have found it real fun, and I am going to say that nobody can cook better Irish stew than I can."

I remained silent, when suddenly he said:

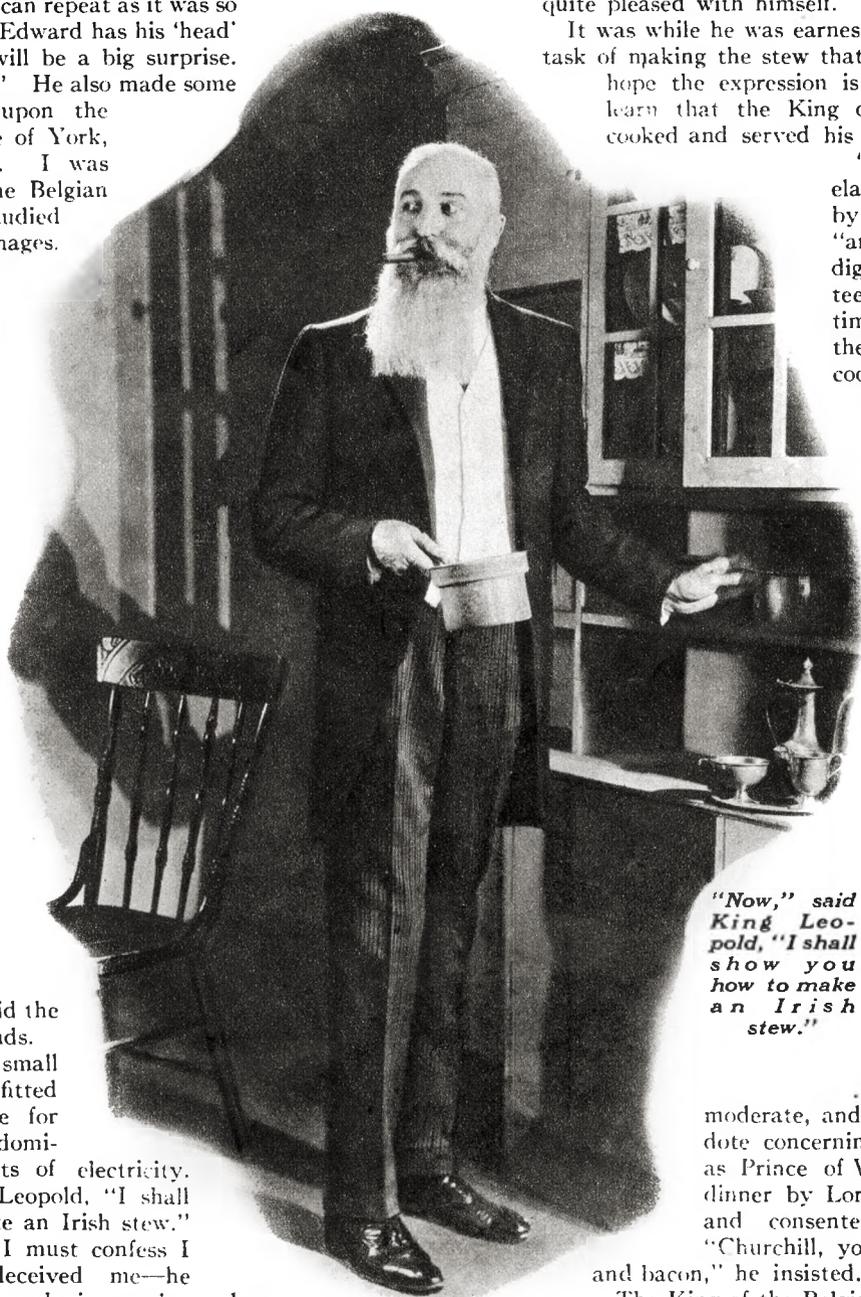
"Is it true, Cheiro, that King Edward is a great gourmet? It is so gossiped in European courts, and when he came to Brussels when Prince of Wales, my chefs vied with each other in preparing wonderful dishes. But most of them were passed by."

I was able to assure His Majesty that, so far as I knew, King Edward was extremely

*"Now," said King Leopold, "I shall show you how to make an Irish stew."*

moderate, and I repeated the anecdote concerning the occasion when, as Prince of Wales, he was asked to dinner by Lord Randolph Churchill and consented on one condition. "Churchill, you must give me liver and bacon," he insisted.

The King of the Belgians laughed heartily at this. With such con- (Continued on page 54)



# A HAUNTED

*Lon Carter believed his lucky coin would ward  
be the means of projecting him into*

By Paul R.

**I** WAS in Melbourne in 1919, you see, when I got this letter announcing that my Uncle Timothy had died, and been buried up in this part of the country where he had lived all his life and built up his prominent position."

Lon Carter sat in the smoking-room of a train which was taking him rapidly to the little town of Valley Hill, Massachusetts. Across from him, listening, sat his friend, Dunlevy. Both were members of a traveling company of *Spun Gold*, a mystery melodrama which had had a year's run on Broadway.

Dunlevy interrupted: "Don't you know where he's buried?"

Carter shook his head, frowning at the swiftly passing meadows and pastures, crossed here and there by the long shadows of tall trees in the setting sun. In one hand he held a fifty-cent piece—a particular fifty-cent piece. His fellow actors were well aware of his superstitions, for many times he had caused them annoyance by insistence upon avoiding black cats, owls, open umbrellas indoors, and getting out of bed on the left side. Not the least of his beliefs was concerned with the virtue of his fifty-cent coin, given him many years before by his Uncle Timothy, with whom he had lived. It was Uncle Timothy who had inculcated in him his superstitious beliefs since early childhood. The lucky coin never left Carter's pocket, for he always recalled the eccentric old man's words when giving him the coin: "Guard it with care, for some day it will be the means of your fortune!"

"For one thing," Carter said, after a short silence, "I lost the letter from his wife, my aunt. She hated me, although we never met. I imagine it was because she believed Uncle Timothy favored me over her. His will seemed to prove it, and now she's been dead for the last three years. I do know that the old man was

secretly buried, at night. With him was buried——"

"But there must be some records, Lon," Dunlevy protested, a perplexed frown on his face. Again Carter shook his head. "He was

a very, very queer old scout, and he ruled my aunt like a sergeant rules a buck private.

Whatever he said went. Being very wealthy, as he was, you can imagine that he was the center of some interest. But all I could learn from the lawyer back home was the fact that he left a very peculiar will. He stipulated that all his remaining cash, since his wife had her own money, was to be turned into jewelry, and that that jewelry must be buried with him." Carter leaned forward. "If I can find where he's buried, the will says, I'm to have the store of jewelry!"

Dunlevy's face expressed amazement. Then—"But why all that trouble to leave you an inheritance?"

"He didn't believe in banks, and wanted all that money to stay with him to the last. I tell you he had very strange fancies."

"So now you're trying to find where he's buried?"

"Exactly. The stones and gold and silver in his coffin must be worth several hundred thousand dollars."

Dunlevy whistled. "And you don't know where the grave is—not the faintest idea?"

Carter leaned forward, his eyes intent on the face of the man across from him. "Only one thing: it's in the

State of Massachusetts, and it's in an old church with a gray-stone front

*Lon shuddered. The mouldy smell of the crypt made him sick with horror.*



# HALF-DOLLAR

*off evil—but he did not dream that it would  
the hideous company of the dead*

## Milton

and sides, while the back is brownstone. Ought to be able to recognize that if I see it, don't you think?"

"But why haven't you come sooner, if your uncle died eight years ago?"

"Well, I had a five-year contract that I had just signed when I got my aunt's letter. And when that expired, I agreed, as a favor to the management, to stay another year at a much higher salary. Then I came, and still I haven't been able to find Uncle Timothy's grave." Then he added: "You see, to save expenses I got this job with *Spun Gold*."

Dunlevy nodded. "If you want any help in your search, you understand, just as a friend I'd be willing——"

The train pulled into the tiny wooden station at Valley Hill, their destination, as Carter rose and thanked Dunlevy for his offer. Together they left the smoking-room to get their bags. The rest of the car was filled with other members of the company, and within a few moments they were jolting harshly over a rutted road on the way to the hotel.

As Carter walked slowly along the principal street of Valley Hill, a few hours later, three crows winged silently over the blunt steeple of the old church before him. Instinctively he crossed and uncrossed two fingers of his left hand to ward off the bad luck.

He stopped then to look closely at the church. With a thumping heart he saw, in the dim twilight, that the old structure conformed to certain particulars. He ran down a narrow gravel path along the side. He saw then that the old church had a gray-stone front and sides, and a brownstone back! He hastened to the front, and stopped once more. Through his mind raced the memory of his uncle's strange will—and of the treasure!

The murky twilight shrouding the church's ivy-covered walls, and throwing fantastic shadows across its leaning porch, produced upon him a sensation of apprehension. Absolute silence only enhanced this sensation. With nervous fingers he twisted the lucky fifty-cent piece in his trousers-pocket: with wide-open eyes he stared about through the creeping darkness, and saw not a soul.

To one side of the dismal-looking structure he could discern dim and motionless blotches of white which he knew were the tottering headstones of graves. But Timothy had been buried in a vault; so much he knew. Treading silently on the thick grass of the lawn, he stepped forward. He felt certain that within he would find his uncle's burial-



*The old woman raised her candle, and its flickering light revealed the end of an ancient casket on its shelf*

place, the spot where the treasure had been hidden for years.

As he ascended the steps of the porch, a creak of the rotting wood startled him. Again he stood for a moment, listening for any sound from inside. Far down the dusky street behind him he could hear a child's shout. That was all; the church remained oppressively still. After peering into the gloom, he entered the open front door.

"Funny there's no one about," he muttered.

HE stood at the end of the aisle. At the altar end, a gray light filtered through a window, marking only the faintest outlines of the interior. Again he fingered the lucky coin in his pocket. As his moist fingers wrapped themselves about the surface of the coin, suddenly he saw the outlines of a door on the far side of the church. A very faint, wavering light showed him that someone, or something, had lit a candle beyond that open door. His staring eyes fixed on the faint oblong of dim light—indicating someone who could answer his inquiries. Then, carefully stepping on the stone flagging, he moved toward the inner door.

As he approached, his fingers clutched the coin. His breath almost ceased, for he could not throw off an eerie feeling of oppression, and he slowed his pace. He reached the door and discovered a stairway of stone, going down to the right. It was faintly illuminated from some unseen source. Again he advanced, peering and listening. But still he heard no sound but his own sharp intakes of breath.

He crept down the stone steps to the bottom, and froze to the spot. Around the corner of the dark vault-like room under the church appeared a withered old woman, gliding silently on worn shoes. Before her squinting eyes she held a large candle. This was the light that illumined the door at the head of the stairs! Sighting Carter, who waited motionless and speechless with amazement and fearful wonder, she veered toward him, and came to a halt beneath his eyes. He broke into a nervous laugh.

"I was a little frightened for a moment." He looked at the wrinkled face that was leering at him.

In a scratchy, unsteady voice she asked suddenly: "Want to see something, mister?"

The candle guttered and smoked before Carter's eyes, which were now becoming accustomed to the ominous gloom. He could see that dull plastered walls, with rotting wooden columns, surrounded him.

"I WANT to know if Timothy Carter is buried here," he asked, removing his hat to wipe the sudden cold perspiration from his forehead. "Can you tell me?"

"Buried here?" the emaciated old woman repeated scornfully. Then her thin, dry lips split in a silent laugh, revealing shrunken, toothless gums. Carter started back. His muscles tightened when she leaned forward and muttered: "Do you want to see bones, mister? Bones?"

She turned her back on him and moved away, making not a sound on the damp floor. Irresistibly drawn, Carter followed her around the corner. The scrape of his feet, as he stepped uneasily, seemed unduly loud. She did not look back, but continued straight up to an oaken door in the wall ahead of them. Without stopping, she swung it open. It made no sound.

She led him inside the crypt which the opening of the door

had revealed. With a yellow, swollen-veined hand she beckoned to Carter, who came on, peering about him for some possible sign of his uncle's grave, and still clutching the lucky coin in his pocket.

He felt strangled by the stale air of the place, but he stood silently beside her and with fascinated eyes watched her lean over and pick up something white. She held it in the light of the candle, and again her lips opened silently. In her hand she held a small skull. Carter saw her spidery fingers hold it almost lovingly, as he listened in a daze to her harsh voice.

"This skull, mister—it's years old. It belonged to one of the finest ladies ever born in this village. What a sweet girl she was!" The old woman broke off to leer at Carter, who could only stare at the skull's black eyeholes and the gleaming surface, caressed by the yellow fingers. The voice went on: "These bones in the crypt, mister—I've watched 'em for many a year. I know every one of 'em. Here's this girl, and over here—" she placed the little skull carefully on the ground among a heap of long, thin white bones, and shuffled over to another corner—"and over here is the Captain."

She turned about once more to peer at Carter, who stood by the bones of the beautiful girl, unable to move his feet. What sort of ghoulish woman was this that loved ancient

bones—who relished the feel of them, who spent her days alone among these ghastly heaps of human remains? The old, old voice rasped on:

"The Captain. What a fine man he was! He was killed in the Great War. See, mister—what a strong man he was?"

Before his eyes the old woman

held a long thin shin-bone. Her fingers were clasped around it tightly. Under reddened eyelids her rheumy eyes searched it anxiously, as if to discover if it were going to fall to dust. Carter moved nearer. He looked down at the heaps of bones on the floor. There were some little piles separated from the rest, while one end of the crypt was a mass of white gleams.

"Ha, ha! What fine men and women there are here!" The ragged old woman shuffled about, throwing the wavering rays of her candle on the walls of the dismal room. Carter cleared his throat huskily.

"Do you know if Timothy Carter is buried here?" he managed to ask in desperation. He shuddered. The mouldy smell of the crypt made him sick with horror.

"Who d'ye say, mister?" The old woman raised her candle, and its flickering light revealed the end of an ancient casket on its shelf.

"Timothy Carter?" A cold shiver crawled up and down his spine, for the old woman seemed to glare at him malevolently.

"Timothy Carter?" She coughed hackingly, and again he saw the malevolent glare. "You'll have to ask somewhere else." Her voice cracked in a shrill laugh.

The very hair rose on Carter's scalp. His throat closed up tightly.

He decided suddenly that he wanted to go, to get away from this creature. She was stroking a skull she had retrieved from another casket at the end of the crypt. He called to her:

"I'll try to find out in the morning. I'm very much obliged for your trouble." He edged toward the door.

"With horrified eyes Carter stared at the wall. The lantern light fell clearly on it, but where there had been a large oaken door the night before, there was now a solid brick wall.

"Great God! The fearful truth burst upon his mind."

With swift, shuffling steps she preceded him to the door of the crypt, and led the way, peering from time to time over her bent shoulder, to see if he followed.

At the bottom of the stairway, she stopped and grinned. "I hope you enjoyed yourself, mister."

"OH, yes—interesting——" Mechanically he reached in his pocket, brought out a coin, and with an unavoidable feeling of repugnance, placed it in her greedy hand. As his fingers brushed hers, he found them cold—damply cold.

With a muttered "Good night" he fled up the dark stairs, through the pitch-black interior of the church, and out onto the porch. Outside it was dark, too, but here and there through the gloom pierced the lights of houses and distant lamp-posts.

He breathed deeply, and on an impulse, looked back toward the door through which he had just come so rapidly. He could see nothing, hear nothing. Jumping off the creaking porch, he walked toward the town—disconsolate, for, after all, this was not where his uncle was buried. Uncle Timothy's will had given a fairly definite description of the grave in which he was to be placed. Carter had seen no such grave or vault.

Carter arrived at the theater just a few moments before performance time. In great haste he ripped off his clothes, made up, and put on the English Police Inspector's uniform he wore throughout the play. Dunlevy, who shared the same dressing-room, was already standing in the wings, and so Carter did not notice until the first intermission the paper which reposed on his dressing-table. Then at once he recognized it for what it was: his notice. In short, two weeks from that coming Saturday night his services would no longer be required. Somehow he finished the performance, but his mind was stunned. He spoke his lines and did the required business mechanically. After the performance he removed his uniform and make-up dejectedly. Dunlevy watched him with sympathy.

"Never mind, Lon," he told Carter. "That's just a bad break. The stage-manager's brother is coming. This is probably to make room for him."

"I know, John, but I needed this job pretty badly. It took me around the country——"

In his discouragement he did not desire to speak of his disappointment in the church. He dressed slowly, his mind

filled with projects for further search for the real church with the brown-stone back. Together the two men walked to the frame hotel where the company had put up for the one night in Valley Hill. As they walked into the lobby, the company manager approached them.

"I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Carter, but your trunk has been lost, somehow."

"My trunk? Lost?"

"I don't think it was taken off the train when we arrived here," the man apologized. "I'm very sorry."

"Hmph. Much good that does. Oh, well, it'll come back if I'm lucky." They ascended to their small double room.

As they prepared for bed, Carter felt in his trousers-pockets to remove his money for the night. He felt carefully, removed a few loose bills and some change, and examined the coins, first slowly, then feverishly.

"My coin, my lucky coin—where is it?"

"Can't you find it?"

"No! I always carry it in this pocket—it must have fallen out. Oh, if I lost it——" Then he stared hard at Dunlevy. "I'll bet I gave it to that awful old woman."

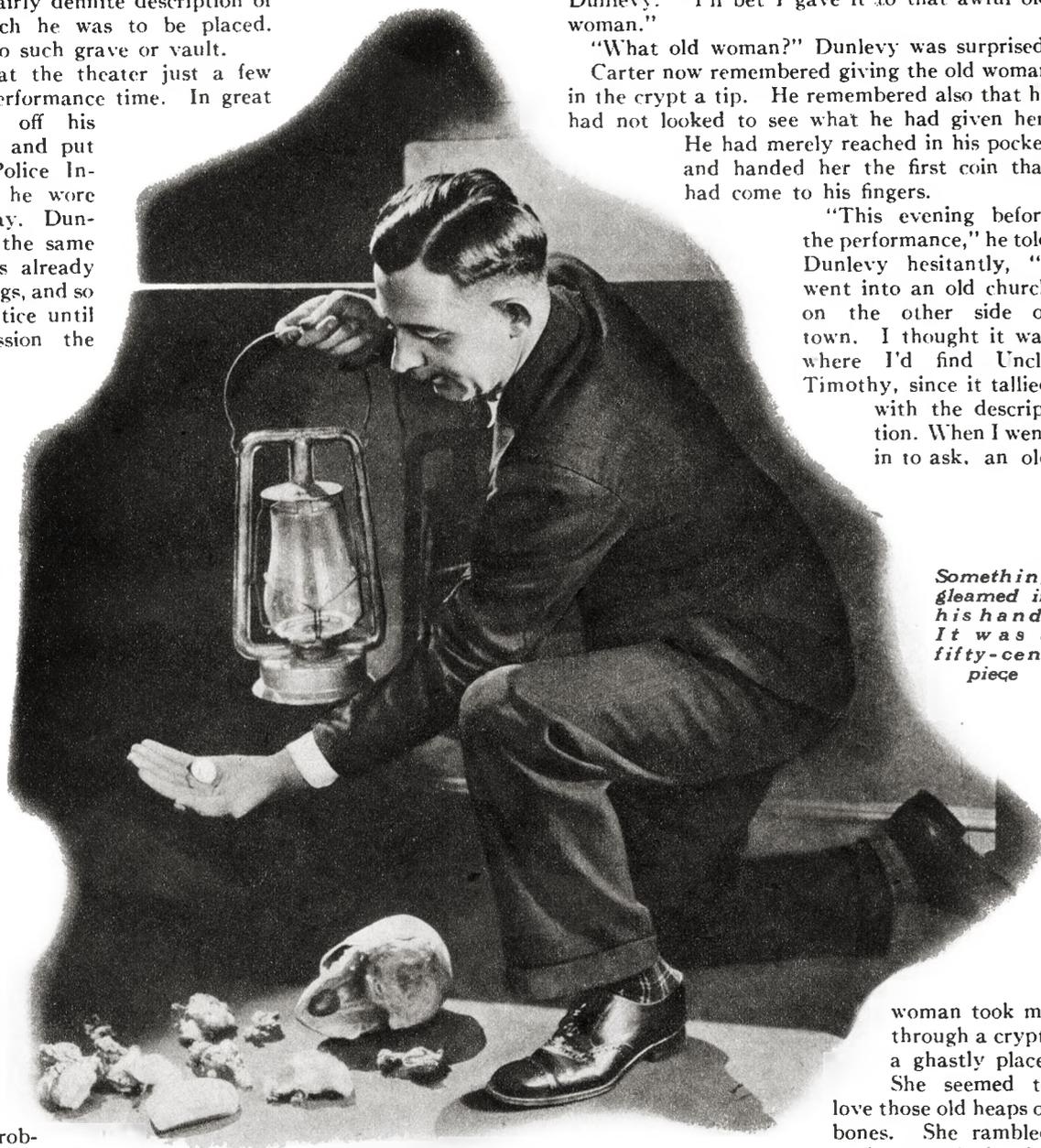
"What old woman?" Dunlevy was surprised.

Carter now remembered giving the old woman in the crypt a tip. He remembered also that he had not looked to see what he had given her.

He had merely reached in his pocket and handed her the first coin that had come to his fingers.

"This evening before the performance," he told Dunlevy hesitantly, "I went into an old church on the other side of town. I thought it was where I'd find Uncle Timothy, since it tallied with the description. When I went in to ask, an old

*Something  
gleaned in  
his hand.  
It was a  
fifty-cent  
piece*



woman took me through a crypt, a ghastly place. She seemed to love those old heaps of bones. She rambled on in a cracked voice

—and I could get nothing out of her. But I didn't see any tomb that could have been the one. I tell you I must have given her my fifty-cent piece!"

"But you can get it back from her to-morrow, Lon," Dunlevy suggested. "And I'm sorry that (*Continued on page 93*)

# HOW I Got

*This lover, who used the powers of darkness forgot one thing. The penalty for a psychic*

By Hugh Maddox  
as told to Katharine Metcalf Roof

**Y**OU may not believe in this spiritual adventure. I can only say that it is true to me. Religion has had a good deal to say, first and last, on the subject of lost and saved souls. There are still parsons who will tell you that your soul will be lost if you persist in "sin," but that it can be saved by giving up your evil ways, whatever they may be. There are religions that tell you just how to be saved, even in the very moment of death: cheerful religions that believe we are all saved whatever we do. And there was stern old Calvin of that darker, illogical age which believed in the grim and horrible doctrines of preordination, infant damnation, and all the rest of it. I have studied all the faiths.

But there is such a thing as an actual lost soul. I myself have proved it.

As a child I grew up demanding and getting my own way. I don't think I was naturally wilful or tyrannical, but my father died when I was seven, and I was very different from my mother, so that I bewildered her. And, as I was stronger than she, I gradually dominated her.

I had everything that I could want in a material way, and as a boy the demand for affection was not very strong in me. I knew it first as callow romance. In my prep days I fell in love with one of the professor's daughters—the usual thing, with shallow roots, having no significance in my development.

In my freshman days it was an older girl, something of a vamp, not so good for me. I disliked to remember it when it was over. After that, a procession of light, harmless young loves. They took me through college, carried me over the year of traveling my mother gave me—well, it was not until I met Corinne Quintard that I really learned what it was to love intensely, unhappily, absorbingly.

*Unwilling, but held in hypnotic subjection, Corinne put her arm about my neck and kissed me*

For I met Corinne just a little bit too late. She was in her second season and already engaged.

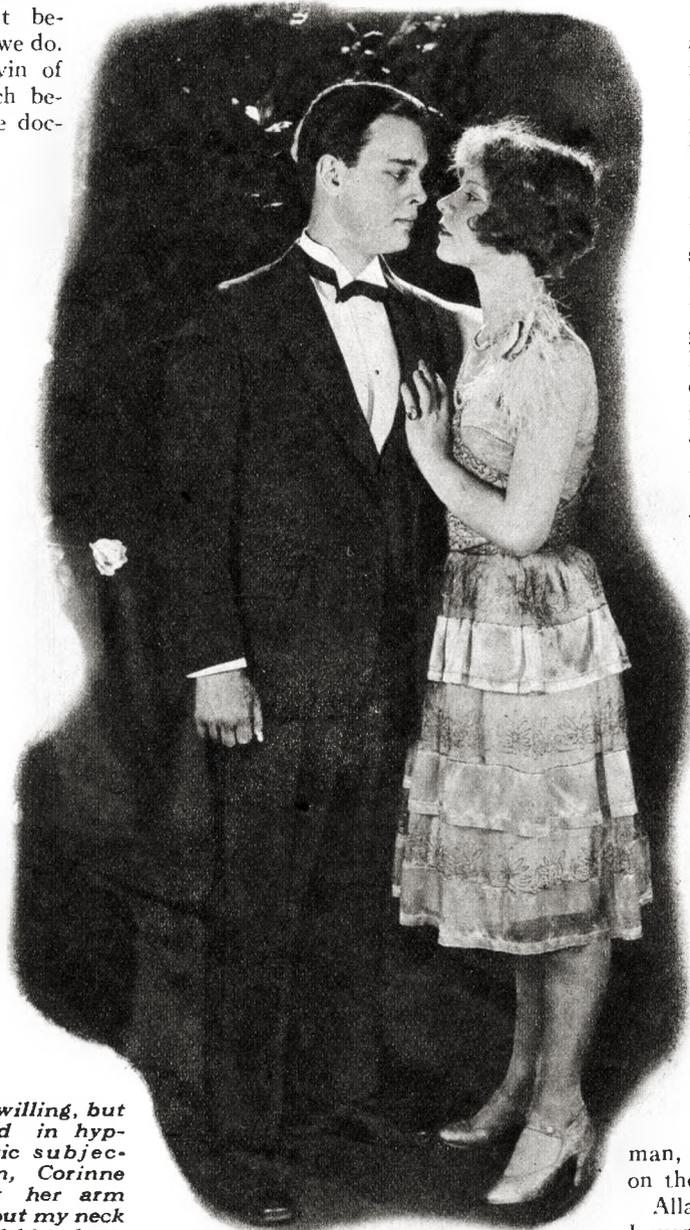
How shall I describe this small, slight, elusive girl-thing who was destined to have such a devastating effect upon my life? She was not exactly pretty. She was not conspicuous in any way, yet I felt her profoundly the moment I first saw her; a dainty, blow-away, piquant girl with large eyes sometimes gray, sometimes blue, dark-lashed and expressive, perhaps beyond the owner's emotional capacity; a small, childish, rather retroussé nose, burnt-gold hair, a sensitive mouth capable of a peculiar and disturbing sort

of sweetness; magnetic voice that exactly belonged to her, and something individual and indescribable in every movement and expression of her personality. Corinne was tremendously like herself.

It was the romantic, idealistic side of me that Corinne took by storm. From the first she made her attack—by no means a conscious or intentional one—upon my imagination. I wanted her as I have never wanted anything or anyone in all my life, but it was an inner thing that I desired to possess, her soul more than her body.

But Corinne, as I have said, was already engaged, and to an old friend of mine—a man almost unbelievably eligible from every standpoint. No wonder her worldly aunt was well satisfied. Allan Grayson was not only an excellent match in the worldly sense; he was all that is manly, dependable, clean, and strong. He was a far better man than I in all respects. That, I have never disputed for a moment. He was just the husband for Corinne, who was, and still is, more child than woman, undeveloped, innocently pleasure-loving. I, who am unstable, turbulent of spirit, lacking in judgment and control, am a poor steersman, indeed, for such a light craft on the sea of life.

Allan had captured Corinne, and I wanted her. That was the be-



# Back My SOUL

*to overcome the weak resistance of a woman,  
crime is, of all punishments, the most hideous*

ginning of the trouble. And Corinne innocently enjoyed my exaggerated devotion, enjoyed her power over me, and used it—not with intentional cruelty, for I know now that it was impossible for her to conceive of the emotional excesses of my storm-tossed nature, but just with the natural cat-and-mouse instinct that is in all women—until the day came that I frightened her. After that, she avoided me, and that brought me to the crossroad, the soul's crossroad, the choice between right and wrong.

One summer night Corinne had played upon me in her light, unthinking, childish way at a dance. She roused my jealousy, and tormented me with fitting, illusive glimpses of possible tenderness—until in the dark of the shrubberies I kissed her, as Allan had never kissed her. I knew that, by the way it frightened and startled her. It awakened no response, only made her want to run from me. She left me in hell—at the entrance of hell, I should say, for I was destined to enter it and penetrate its murkiest depths.

Corinne was not the modern, courageous boy-girl. She was ultra-feminine and afraid of quite a variety of things. Perhaps, most of all, it was life that she feared. Had her destiny permitted her to do so, she would have lived forever on the surface. Possibly, safe with Allan, she might have done so.

I have said that from boyhood I had had my own way, with the result that my strong will had grown into an irresistible force, and was felt in a greater or less degree by all who came in touch with me. At school and college it had not run counter to that of my teacher's, because it was not so much that I wanted my own way in general, as that when I wanted an especial thing strongly, I simply *had* to have it. Until I was denied Corinne's love, I had never wanted anything that I could not obtain. That this will of mine was of a hypnotic type I had come to realize, without thinking much about it, in those parlor games of willing, telepathy, *et cetera*, which we all indulge in at one time or another.

*Allan  
was back  
before I  
knew it.  
Allan,  
my friend,  
whose  
trust I had  
betrayed!*



One rainy evening at Allan's house we chanced to play one of these games. It came Corinne's turn to be willed and I chanced to be the willer. Every time it worked. With my hand on her bright head, Corinne found the key under the pillow, kissed the little god of love in the sunroom opening out of the large living-room, picked up the volume of *Sonnets from the Portuguese* on the table and opened to the forty-second sonnet. Someone read the first line aloud:

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

When it came to that sonnet, Corinne flung off the bandage with one of her swift, childish gestures. "I don't like it. It's spooky! I don't want to do this any more."

Allan did not like it, either. I caught sight of his kind face, disturbed, perplexed. The next minute the bandage was tied over another pair of eyes, and the game went on with less spectacular success.

Corinne seemed quite seriously disturbed, like a child not knowing the reason. She wandered off by herself into the sunroom, sweet and shadowy in the half light, and stood looking at the little god of love she had kissed in the center of the tiny, tinkling fountain. I followed her. She turned and spoke:

"Why did you make me do that idiotic thing?"

"Oh, just the first thing that came into my head," I answered carelessly. I stood staring at her, trying to fathom those tender, careless eyes, very dark now, a trifle frightened.

Suddenly Corinne's brows contracted and she looked away.

"Don't," she said sharply.

"Don't what?"

"Don't look at me like that."

"Like what?"

"The way you are looking."

I laughed, but my laugh had an unnatural sound. "I don't know how I was looking."

"Yes, you do," replied Corinne wilfully, illogically. "You are trying to make me do something again."

"I am not," I protested with perfect truth. "But I'd like to."

Corinne turned her delicate shoulder upon me. "Well—don't," she said. "I don't like it."

She walked away from me and went back to the others, ignoring me for the rest of the evening, although once or twice, when I looked her way, I caught her troubled gaze upon me. When her eyes met mine, she always looked hurriedly away.

WE met almost every day that summer, although we were not often alone together. I knew that I ought to go away—that I ought to thrust Corinne out of my mind and heart altogether. I had no right to her; she belonged to another man. And though my heart told me that she did not love Allan as Allan and I understood love, neither had she shown the slightest indication of loving me, although once or twice I felt—or fancied I felt—that I held a certain attraction for her. But with Allan she was at ease, protected, comfortable—safe.

I have no one but myself to blame—no one. But it was Corinne who threw the temptation in my way. She little guessed, poor child, the dark depths over which, butterfly-like, she flitted.

She had retained her resentment of my domination over her in the willing game, and she wanted to punish me for it. She did—beyond her understanding or desire.

Again it was after a dance in the garden, but this time Corinne had been dancing with Allan. I sat a few paces away, companionless, save for my cigarette, on the edge of the fountain. When Corinne caught sight of me, she began to make love to Allan. She was soon in his arms. Of course, it was his right, but the sight was more than I could well endure. I rose, threw away my cigarette, and strolled toward them. Allan released her at once when he saw me approaching. I stood there before them, leaning against a tree. An idea had come to me.

I would see if I could make Corinne send Allan away. I focused my will on the thought and bent my eyes on her in the semi-darkness. After a moment she began to fidget about in her seat. She looked up at me, and when she had done so, did not look away again. I increased the force of my demand. Corinne's lips parted; then, with her eyes on mine, she spoke:

"Allan, I wish you would get me my shawl."

HE turned a surprised look upon her. "Your shawl? Dear girl, it's as hot as blazes."

But Corinne shivered. "I know it, but somehow I'm chilly. I want it."

Allan jumped to his feet and was off at once. My eyes were still on Corinne.

"Come here," I said in a low voice.

"Why should I?" Surprise and resentment struggled in Corinne's tone. "It's for you to come to me—if I wanted you—but I don't."

"Yes," I replied steadily, "you *do* want to come to me—and you are coming. You are coming right over here to me before Allan comes back."

She gave a little frightened sob and her wide eyes met mine. Her hands came together, clutching each other. But she rose to her feet, took a step, hesitated, covered her face

with her hands, dropped them, and slowly came right to me. She stood looking up at me.

"Well, are you satisfied?" She spoke shakily, trying to smile.

"Not yet. You kissed Allan because you knew it drove a knife into my heart. Now, you are going to kiss *me*—just the way you kissed him."

Corinne gave a little cry. "I'm not. I won't. How dare you say such a thing! I'm engaged to Allan. I don't want to kiss you."

I continued to look steadily down into her eyes. "Yes, you do. You want to kiss me just the way I want to kiss you. You are going to kiss me before Allan comes back."

There was something dreadful about the little silence that followed. I felt it, even through the wild tumult of pain and desire that filled my heart.

Unwilling, but held in hypnotic subjection, Corinne put her arm about my neck and kissed me. She drew my head down as she pressed her lips against mine.

HOW can I describe that kiss! Its torment far outweighed its bliss. Corinne's sweet lips on mine, but without volition, without desire. It was as if I kissed her carved image. It was like the kiss "in hopeless fancy feigned on lips that are for others."

And Allan was back before I knew it. Allan, my friend, whose trust I had betrayed! He had seen all!

"So that is why you sent me away," he said quietly.

His voice roused Corinne. She stood staring at him in bewildered misery like a child.

"No, Allan, no," she said. "I didn't send you away for that. I wanted my shawl. I don't know why I kissed Hugh. I—I don't care anything about him. Please don't be angry at me, Allan."

Her words goaded me. I addressed Allan. "She may not know why she let me kiss her," I said, "but she

doesn't love you, either, Allan. You might as well face that."

Allan looked at me intently before he replied very quietly. "I know she doesn't love me yet. But she will if you'll leave her alone. She doesn't love you, either, and she doesn't like you as well as she does me—by half."

"That's true, that's true," sobbed Corinne. "I don't like him one bit. I'm afraid of him. Allan, dear, please take me away where I will never see him again, *please*, Allan."

She was a bit hysterical and caught at his coat like a child crying piteously, and Allan gathered her into his strong, gentle arms.

"HUSH, dear, hush. There is nothing to be afraid of. Hugh can't hurt you. He doesn't want to. He's in love with you, too—that's all. Of course, he'd like to get you away from me. I would in his place. But we mustn't let him."

"No, no. We mustn't let him." Corinne said, and sobbed. And she went away with Allan, leaving me with hell in my heart.

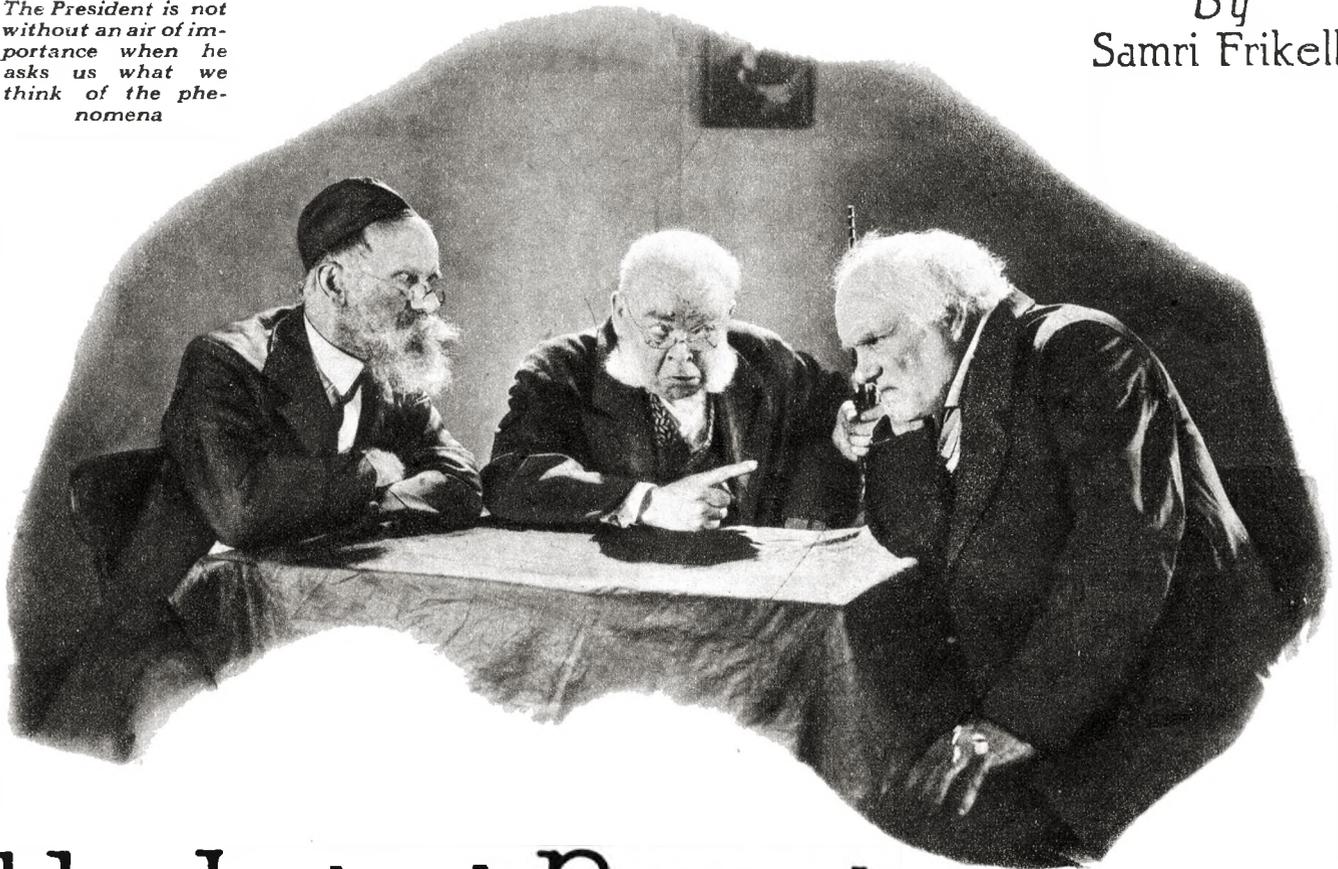
I think it was that night—alone, under the light of the moon, which occult scientists tell us is an actual source of evil—that I made my deliberate plan (*Continued on page 89*)

"I walked the streets all day, and for the first time I noticed how men turned their faces away from me in the street, how the little children ran from me . . . I had become that most dread thing on earth—a human body without a soul . . ."

"There was nothing to do but return, return to the palace of sin where oblivion was to be found. But on the very threshold of the place—"

*The President is not without an air of importance when he asks us what we think of the phenomena*

By  
Samri Frikell



# Has Iceland Proved That Ghosts EXIST?

*Here is a scientist's account of amazing séances held by a Ghost Club. The members sat in the darkness of a bare room and listened to the madhouse clatter of discarnate forces fighting for mastery*

**H**OW little any of us know what is really going on in the world! For instance—how many people have ever heard of the Ghost Club of Iceland?

Professor Gudmunden Hannesson, of the University of Reykjavik, Iceland, has recently disclosed the existence of this extraordinary club and the remarkable occult services that are held regularly at the cold top of the earth.

Professor Hannesson has favored us with a vivid description. He says:

I dare say that it would interest the reader to get some idea of the meetings, or séances, of the Ghost Club; what the surroundings are like, and what takes place at the séances.

We leave home in the evening and go along the dirty and badly illuminated roads. We come to a small box-like house with flat roof and large windows with closed shutters. In the lobby there is a faint light, and a crowd of people, who in silence and with a grave mien are taking off their coats.

From the lobby the people go into a fair-sized hall with benches in the part nearest the door. At the opposite end, up to the middle of the wall is a pulpit-fashioned lectern, in

front of which is a large empty space. The room is not very inviting. The air is stale and damp—as might be expected, for with the windows closed with shutters on the outside and on the inside covered with heavy, opaque blinds, there is but little ventilation. The light is poor; one petroleum lamp hanging down from the ceiling does not do justice to a room of that size.

In front of the foremost bench stands a small harmonium, and in the empty space close to the lectern there are two chairs and a table. On this table are some tin funnels, called trumpets, and a music-box, while in the corner stands a huge tin funnel fastened to the top of a high iron frame and so arranged that it may be turned in any direction.

People seat themselves on the benches and the room is soon filled. Then comes the medium, a young, handsome fellow. He sits down on one of the chairs in front of the lectern, and beside him on the other chair sits a man who is to watch him when the light is put out, and report if he finds that he resorts to imposture. The President scans the hall to see if everybody is present and that everything is in order. Then the door is locked and the lamp is put out, but a candle is lit for the man who is to play the harmonium. (Continued on page 70)

# The MIND

*Men armed with fearsome illusions block the advancing Purcells strike in*

**O**WEN and I—we are brothers—had become involved in the strangest battle ever waged against black magic. We discovered that a medium, Daniel Buwalda, had solved the problem of reading the minds of other persons. He was a master telepathist.

Buwalda had made a confederate of Coralie Griffin, a beautiful Armenian woman, who had been married to a New York banker. The latter, James Griffin, had committed suicide because Buwalda had willed him to do so.

Then Buwalda had launched a plot to bring all humanity under his spell. His weird powers enabled him to control minds, as well as to read them. He quickly piled up a fortune

of a billion dollars, because he could foretell the fluctuations of stocks on Wall Street. He caused a reign of terror in the city by causing the police to see visions that destroyed their morale, and by encouraging criminals to take the upper hand.

Owen and I, aided by Peter Kanarjian, who was Coralie's cousin and in love with her, and by a taxi chauffeur, Tim Nolan, finally located Buwalda in an apartment house on Fifth Avenue.

At a séance, conducted by Owen under the pseudonym of Dr. Proteus, we had learned that Coralie was actually the passive source of the magician's power. When she was present, he obtained telepathic results, though why or how this was so, even he was unable to tell. If we could separate them physically, Buwalda would be rendered harmless.

Then Owen telegraphed to Peter and myself to meet him in front of the apartment building, to take part in the grand assault we had already planned. We responded promptly.

**I**N the cab, with Nolan obeying me to the extent of steering a more cautious course than was his wont, Peter and I reviewed our situation coolly enough. The visits we had paid to our folks had served to steady us, to lighten somewhat the gloom into which the fantastic state of affairs in the city had plunged us. We knew that we were on our way to take part in a forlorn hope, but at least it promised to be a physical combat, and no man of ordinary courage shrinks from such a test. The disembodied forces of evil are infinitely harder to face.

Peter did not fail, however, to bring into the open an aspect of our problem which I had subconsciously been trying to evade. "I was greatly puzzled last night by the attitude of the spirits toward Dr. Proteus," he said bluntly.

"You mean—"

"That it was strange they should have been unwilling to give him the address to which we are now going, Buwalda's address. They had come for the purpose of helping us, and yet they seemed afraid to trust him too far."

"At these séances, the living often find the behavior of the dead irrational," I argued lamely.

"The spirits of Griffin and the lawyer Dickinson were amazingly rational, on the other hand. If they know more



Owen leaped to Coralie's side

# READER

way to Buwalda's last stronghold. But the totally unexpected fashion

## As told to W. Adolphe Roberts

about Dr. Proteus than we do, how are we justified in scorning their distrust of him?"

"It may have been that they feared the vengeance of his enemies in the after-world, and not at all that they themselves wanted to hide the truth from him."

"Does he really have enemies of that kind?"

"Certainly. He is a learned occultist—a sorcerer, as they would have said in the Middle Ages. He has probed into regions which are closed to ordinary men, and because his motives are good the evil spirits detest him. What do you suppose those monstrous bats that visited us were? They were demons, come to destroy him, and incidentally the rest of the company. The earth-spirit, Vulpia, drove them away. At a former séance, we were attacked by a demon who had assumed the traditional satanic form. Pretty serious enemies those, if you ask me!"

"Demons!" mumbled Peter, paling. "I heard talk of such beings as a child in Armenia." He crossed himself, and relapsed into silence.

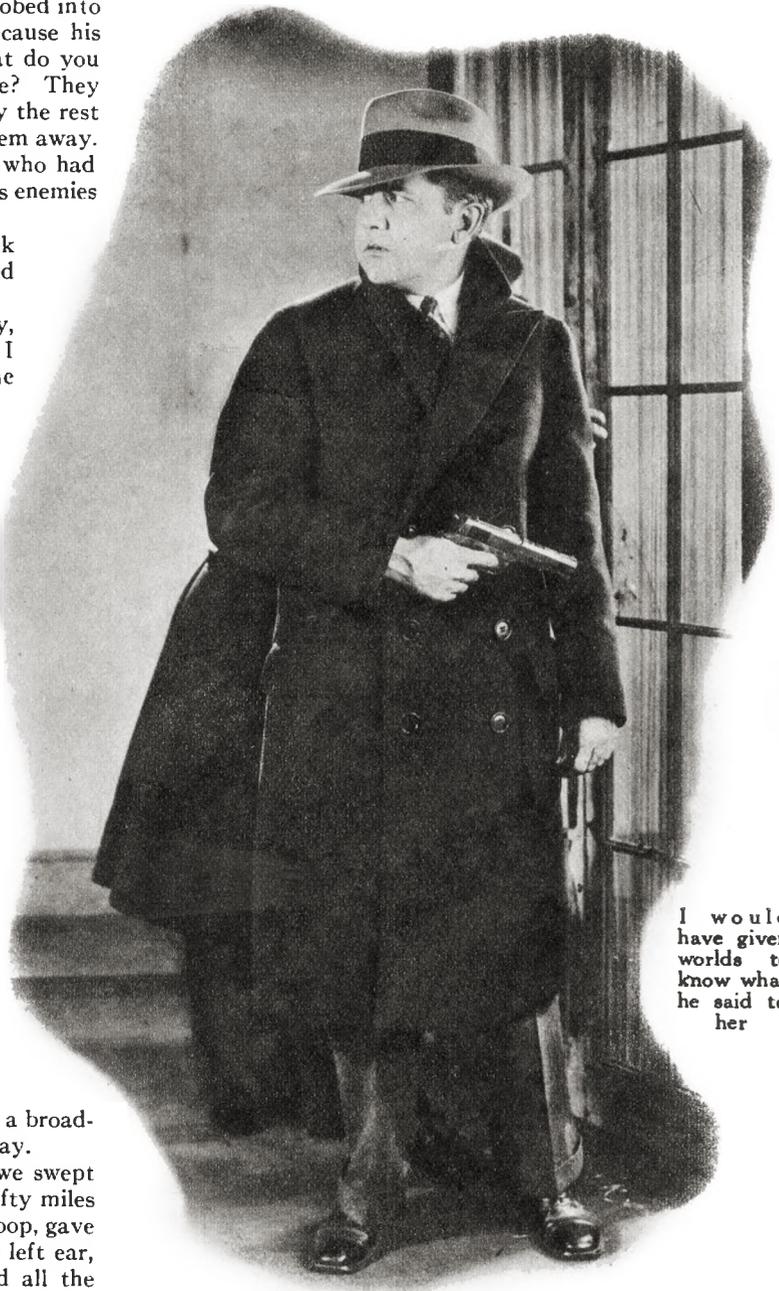
I had come to my brother's defence in all sincerity, and as I spoke, the conviction grew upon me that I had given the only possible explanation. But the menace hanging over us was made the darker thereby. Owen had admitted in his telegram that the appeal to Vulpia had not been successful. She, too, might now be a foe. In the face of increasing hostility on the supernatural plane, how could we hope to win?

Luckily, the mood of despondency passed quickly for both of us. I am sure that the jovial companionship of Tim Nolan had much to do with it. He had started to carol an especially ribald verse concerning the well-known "Mademoiselle from Armentières." I laughed, Peter followed suit, and we snapped back into the realistic anticipation of battle which had thrilled us at the beginning of the ride.

We had now crossed the Bridge and were speeding northwards in Manhattan. I observed that the streets were somewhat more animated than in Brooklyn. Groups of citizens had assembled in the open and were discussing events with a show of bravado. Nervous policemen moved them along, or joined in the debates, as it struck their individual fancies. There was even a scattering of newsboys plying their trade. I ordered Nolan to stop and bought a paper. But I can remember nothing from the hysterical headlines and the clutter of rumors printed on the front page. It was not a sane metropolitan newspaper I held in my hand, but a broadside of incoherent notes on the panic. I threw it away.

Reaching Fifth Avenue, at Washington Square, we swept up the broad and almost deserted thoroughfare at fifty miles an hour. Nolan was in his element. He let out a whoop, gave his head a vigorous shake that set his cap over his left ear, bent low over his wheel, and undoubtedly enjoyed all the thrills of an aviator crossing the Atlantic.

At Fifty-ninth Street I induced him to slow down. We were approaching our destination, and it was necessary that we keep a sharp look-out for Owen. As we skirted the Central Park side of the Avenue in the Seventies, I caught sight of my brother. He was seated tranquilly on a bench, just beyond one of the entrances to the park. No one else was in view, yet I shuddered in fear for him. It seemed an act of reckless defiance of the powers arrayed against us, that he should be there unguarded. Across the way, towering fifteen stories high, was an apartment house of the newest type. Its number was lettered plainly upon the glass of its arched portal—2011 Fifth Avenue—the number that had been wrenched



I would have given worlds to know what he said to her

from the hesitating spectral lips of James Griffin's ghost.

I called to Nolan to stop. Immediately, Owen arose, crossed the sidewalk rapidly and crowded into the cab with us.

"I got here half an hour ahead of you," he stated nonchalantly. "Had the luck to find a subway train running, and walked over from Lexington Avenue."

"But—for God's sake!—sitting in the open like that," I exploded. "Weren't you molested?"

"NOT seriously. A man did try to stick me up. I think he was merely a footpad. I scared him off with this." He produced an automatic with a silencer attached, then slipped it back into his pocket. "Now, let us drive around the block and get the details of our plan straight."

Nolan swung the car down East Seventy-seventh Street.

"Tell us first how Anna Wagner escaped," I said.

Owen shrugged his shoulders. "It was quite mysterious. The door from the bedroom into the hall had been locked. I heard a sound and rushed in to find the lock lying on the floor. It had been drawn out of the wood, screws and all. The girl couldn't have done it. But she had gone."

"You must have some theory to explain it."

"She received aid—super-normal aid, of course, since she was alone in the room and the lock was drawn from the inside."

"Then your flat is no longer protected by the succubus?"

"So it would appear."

"What did Vulpia say to you?"

"We will not discuss that. It's enough for you to know that she's offended."

I was conscious once more of a sense of horror at the strange bond that evidently existed between the succubus and Owen. But I would not let myself think about it.

I could not afford to. "Well, our errand up here?" I muttered. "Tell us what we are to do."

"Good. The first step is to find out whether Coralie is actually in that apartment house with Buwalda."

"We'll probably be killed at it. But suppose we learn that she is there. What then?"

"We must separate them."

"It's a big order."

"Not so big as you fear, maybe." He turned to Peter, and suddenly his manner became infinitely gracious, though there was no relaxing of his austere dignity. I realized in that moment that he was a natural leader of men, that hitherto he had held in reserve the full measure of his ability to impress and to charm.

"You are whole-heartedly with us in this attempt to save Coralie Griffin, are you not?" he asked.

"To the death, Dr. Proteus," replied Peter earnestly.

"You will unquestioningly obey my orders?"

"I will. I swear it."

"THEN I send you on a mission. You must leave us for perhaps an hour. Cross Central Park on foot and visit the Griffin home on West 72nd Street. Make sure whether Coralie is there instead of here. If she is, do nothing about it but return promptly and let us know."

"And should you locate her in the meantime?"

"Do not worry. I promise that you will be in at the finish with Buwalda—if we are!" replied Owen cryptically.

"You mean that he may have killed you before I get back?"

"Just that. The fortunes of war, you know. If you find us dead, you will have to choose your own course of action."

Peter nodded. "Very well, Dr. Proteus. I shall go now."

The taxi had almost circled the block, and Nolan halted of his own accord. Peter gripped my hand. Then he jumped out and walked straight into the park, his shoulders erect, like a soldier. At that parting, I did not believe I would ever see him again, and there were tears in my eyes.

But Owen was speaking to me rapidly, sternly: "We shall now invade Number Two Thousand and Eleven. We carry no magic talismans with us. Have you got a gun?"

"No."

He slipped a second automatic out of his side pocket and thrust it into my hands. "Be ready for anything. Remember that though our minds are closed to Buwalda, he is in telepathic control of the employees of the building. Undoubtedly, he has prepared them against our possible coming. He can make them see us as thugs or as mad dogs."

I did not answer. My brother stepped on to the sidewalk, and I followed him. He folded his arms and looked speculatively for an instant at the pugnacious, grinning face of Tim Nolan.

"Do you want to come along with us?" he snapped. "It may mean a fight."

"You bet!" cried the wild Irishman, true to form. "It's achin' for a shindy I am."

"Lock your car, then. Keep close behind us. Don't be

surprised at any thing we do. Obey orders as long as I'm alive to give them."

Owen swung around and led the way to the Fifth avenue sidewalk. The massive storm doors of Number Two Thousand and Eleven were shut, but not locked. There was no doorman, though a building of the

kind would surely have been provided with one in normal times. He had fled from his post. We turned the handles one after another and found ourselves in a wide marble-lined lobby, at the far end of which was a desk with a man seated back of it. The place was more like a hotel than an apartment house. I identified it as being a luxurious co-operative of the newest model, which meant that there were at the most two flats to the floor, with some floors occupied by a single tenant. My quick glance took in the fact that the telephone switchboard was deserted. Two negro elevator men, richly uniformed in blue and gold, stood by the elevators. No one else was in sight.

We advanced in single file across the lobby, Owen ahead with his right hand in the pocket of his overcoat. The man behind the desk looked up, gave a violent start and began to grab wildly among his papers for something. His expression baffles description. He seemed to be sick with horror and fear, yet resolved to defend himself. Sweat beaded his forehead.

Owen broke into a run, forward. The house manager—for that plainly was what he was—screamed like a maniac. He fished a revolver from his papers, but before he could use it Owen had whipped out his automatic and fired point blank into the other's face. He reeled, raised his hands half way to his head, then toppled to the floor. The silencer on the weapon had reduced the sound of the detonation to a hollow spitting, and the powder had been smokeless. It was a shocking deed to witness.

I started to follow my brother around the desk. He waved me back. "The negroes! The negroes!" he hissed. "You and Nolan get both of them. Don't let them escape."

I am convinced we were extremely lucky that those two elevator men happened to be of the African race. They were huge fellows and, in ordinary circumstances, could probably have made it hot for us. But as we rushed at them, they were gripped by a fantastic delusion concerning us. Whatever it was that Buwalda had put into their heads, it worked to our advantage rather than his. Superstition surged up in the negroes, and they babbled with fright and turned to run.

Tim Nolan reached his man first. Joyously swinging his fists, the chauffeur landed a blow behind the ear that

"Double-lock the front doors," he said, without looking up. "You—you can't mean it," I protested. "Lock ourselves in? And how will Peter get to us when he returns?"

"Do as I say. The need of it will be brought home to you fast enough. When you have finished, locate the back exits to the building and close them. Cut off communication with the basement. If you find any servants roaming around this floor, run them into the street."

Dazed at the oddness of these instructions, I nevertheless set to work and with Nolan's help I carried them out within fifteen minutes. At the



"We must get the brooch back for you—at all costs," said Owen

sent his victim sprawling. I heard cries for mercy and the echoes of further pommeling as I slipped past them in pursuit of the other black. He had bolted into an open elevator, but I had closed with him before he could get his trembling hands on the control lever. I lay no claim to being a boxer. I doubt if I could have knocked down that heavyweight. So I pushed my automatic into his ribs, forced him to right-about-face, and drove him from the elevator, a prisoner.

"Shall we be killin' the pair of them?" demanded Nolan.

"It won't be necessary," called Owen from the desk. "There's a big linen closet back here, where they'll be perfectly safe."

We half dragged, half bullied, the negroes into the closet and snapped the catch on them. I turned to Owen, who was coolly going through the papers in the drawers of the desk.

head of the stairway to the basement we had a little trouble with the janitor, who wanted to know what the screaming he had heard in the lobby signified. We forced him to retreat and locked the connecting door. At no other point did we encounter an employee.

We then reported back to Owen. A plan of the building was spread out in front of him. He was studying it so intently that he failed to answer me when I spoke. The body of the house manager lay stiffly at his feet, and I experienced a sudden revulsion of feeling.

"I hope you know what you're doing," I said bitterly. "You've murdered one man as a beginning. What's next?"

He raised his head with a jerk. "Murdered, did you say, Hugh? This f—son?" He pointed (Continued on page 68)

# Signed by a Ghost

By William Edmund Fillery

I USED to be frankly sceptical of supernatural narratives—whether I read them in newspapers or heard them from intimate friends—but one summer night, shortly after the execution of my bosom chum, I underwent a startling and terrifying experience that made me call all my former prejudices into question.

Even to this day, I sometimes find it difficult to convince myself that it was not entirely some hideous nightmare, or that I was not the victim of a horrible mental aberration or hallucination. But whether I suffered from an overwrought imagination, or whether the ghastly happenings of that night were actual occurrences, the fact remains that I was confronted the following morning by something gruesomely real that lay in the passage adjoining my bedroom—and on my bureau was the significant, blood-stained document which I had been given the previous night. But I had better begin at the first of my grim narrative, and relate the ensuing weird and unearthly details in the order of their event.

My wife had gone to visit for a week with relatives, and I was staying alone in our cottage. After a late, improvised meal, I settled down in my arm-chair in the living-room, and intended to enjoy a pleasant evening of reading.

Presently, in spite of my interest in the novel I had picked up, I found my mind wandering off into thoughts of my dead chum, who had been hanged unjustly for a crime of which he was innocent. While I was thinking of him, the light in the room suddenly went out, and I was left in darkness. For a moment, I thought that the fuses had blown out; but the light came on again an instant later.

A few moments after ward, the light went out a second time, and several minutes elapsed before it came on.

*He wore  
the garb  
of a con-  
demned  
man!*



Now, I am not temperamental, nor am I of a nervous disposition; but when the light flickered and died a third time, an uneasy, inexplicable feeling began to creep over me. This time the light must have remained extinguished for at least fifteen minutes. During the interval, I, of course, was sitting in complete darkness.

Just before the final return of the light, I could have sworn that something cold and clammy brushed against my face—merely a touch, a momentary sensation, and it was gone; but it had chilled me to the bone. I was assailed immediately by a nauseating sensation and oppressed by a stifling feeling of fear.

I found myself shuddering involuntarily as the light leapt on again. There seemed to be something uncanny in the very air. I had a feeling of—of I cannot explain what; but my flesh felt as one's does when the body is cold and goose-flesh forms upon its surface. However, I was not cold, for it was a balmy night in June.

It was several minutes before I had regained sufficient composure to continue reading. No sooner had I begun to get interested in my book again, however, than I was peremptorily startled by the harsh and insistent ringing of the electric door-bell. With some speculation, for I was not expecting any one to visit me that evening, I placed my book upon the table and went to answer the summons. Before I could reach the door, the bell had commenced to ring again in violent, spasmodic peals. I wondered at the impatience of whoever might be responsible for this racket, and by the time I had got to the door, was more than half inclined to anger at this impertinence.

“What the deuce do you mean by—” I began as I threw open the door.

But I was cut short

*Warren Aylmer was hanged for a crime he did not commit. His mutilated spirit came back in search of the man who was responsible*

by the threatening attitude of a stout man of medium height who stood on the porch. In his right hand he held a revolver, with which he menaced me as he advanced a step nearer and stood in the doorway. The light from the chandelier in the corridor disclosed to my gaze a homely, rotund face, embodying coarse, brutal features, and I observed that there was a livid scar upon his left cheek. Thus, for an instant, we stood eyeing each other. Then I suddenly came to myself.

"What do you want?" I demanded sharply, keeping a wary eye upon his weapon as I spoke. I thought that it must have been his intention to rob me, and I was quickly trying to formulate some plan of outwitting him.

"Shut up!" he rasped. "If you yell out I'll plug you."

I quite believed that he would have "plugged" me without hesitation if I had called for assistance, and so I wisely decided to remain quiet.

"Might I ask just what your intentions are?" I ventured, as he motioned me to back into the passage and, crossing the threshold quickly, closed the door behind him. He still held the revolver steadily aimed at me.

"You've got nothing to be scared of," replied my captor, gruffly, "as long as you don't try any tricks. I'm not going to rob you, and I won't kill you—unless you force me to." He concluded with an ugly chuckle.

"Well, why are you here? And to whom am I indebted for this social call?" I inquired caustically.

"Get into that room—" he nodded meaningly towards the living-room, in which I had been reading—"and don't let your hands drop anywhere near your pockets while you're doing it," he commanded, an ominous note in his voice. "Better stick 'em right up—I'm taking no chances."

I did as he ordered, and he followed me cautiously into the living-room.

"Sit down!" he said and grunted surlily. "Might as well make yourself comfortable while I'm here."

I sat down in my armchair and the stranger drew up a chair opposite and seated himself. Never, to my recollection, had I seen this man before, and, despite all attempts at conjecture, I could not fathom the reason for his dramatic visit to me. However, I curbed my curiosity and waited patiently for him to enlighten me.

"It's like this," began the stranger, settling himself more deeply into his chair, but not for a moment relaxing his vigil nor allowing his aim to stray for even a second. "You don't know me, and probably don't want to know me; but I am going to introduce myself and tell you what made me come to you tonight. My name is Howard Deane—but that doesn't mean anything to you. I don't suppose you ever heard it before. But what does mean something to you, as the friend of Warren Aylmer, is this: I know something about the shooting of Peter

Hawkes, and I want it off my chest right now!"

Warren Aylmer! Warren was my friend who had been hanged but a few days ago! What did this man know of him and of our friendship?

I immediately recollected that, of course, he could have learned of our close friendship from the newspaper accounts of the trial, as my name had been mentioned prominently in connection with the battle to obtain Warren's freedom.

And Peter Hawkes! That was the name of the man who had been murdered—and Warren had been accused of the crime and sentenced upon circumstantial evidence!

"What do you know about my friend? What do you know about the tragedy of which he was convicted?" I cried, springing to my feet in my excitement.

"Sit down!" fairly bellowed this man, Deane. Then, as I hastily obeyed: "Keep cool!" he (*Continued on page 78*)



*I watched, paralyzed, while the Thing came steadily toward me*

# The CURSE of the One-

*When the mystery of his secretary's death  
Martinson was convinced of one thing—  
is the most fearsome of all*

By Laurence Martinson  
As told to Lyon Mearson

**W**HEN I was in Bhangapore, India, I saw the great ruby that is set in the forehead of the One-Eyed Buddha—and I coveted it for my collection. But I had no idea that I would ever possess it.

A year later I returned to New York. One day, Rabindranath Kim, who had been my guide in India, appeared at my home and offered to sell me the sacred stone for \$400,000. I bought it. Through what doubtful means the ruby had come into his hands, I do not know. I did not ask.

I was overjoyed with my

*"Damn it,"  
exclaimed  
Moran, "I  
know I hit  
him!"*

purchase, but I did not dream of the weird events that were to follow. I even laughed at Kim's solemn assertion that whoever touched the ruby would die.

It was no more than a week later that I learned the reality of the curse. At a dinner in my New York house, my friend and secretary, Sam Winship, took the ruby in his hand. A moment later he was lying dead across the table with a gold dagger in his back—while an unearthly scream rent the air in the darkened room.

Twice more that evening the scream was heard—and each

time an inexplicable event took place. When the room went dark the second time, the body of my dead friend disappeared, and, the

third time, the ruby vanished.

When the police arrived, Detective Sergeant Moran and I made a thorough search of the house. In a little attic room, where a great-uncle of mine had committed suicide, we found Sam's body—but we could reach no conclusion as to the means by which it had been carried to that place. Moran was positive that a flesh-and-blood murderer was involved.

Later, when I went alone to that room to conduct a more thorough search, an amazing thing happened. I was confronted by a man seemingly without a head, who struck

at me with a heavy, blunt object. A few moments afterward I saw what appeared to be a disembodied head floating near the ceiling—and a cynical laugh drifted to my ears.

Afraid and bewildered, I made my way into the hall, and found Sinton, my butler, crouching by the stairway, listening. What part could he have had in the strange events?

I made my way noiselessly down-stairs and reported to Moran, and we decided to question Sinton. But we could not find him. His room was empty; his bed had not been slept in.

I stood there in that little room, praying that this night of horrors might end. How could I know that even at that

moment a horrible Thing awaited us in the hall?

We moved to the door, Moran and I. Gradually, silently, we opened it—and stood, paralyzed. In front of us was a ghostly, white-robed figure!

Slowly, as though it were a body moving in another dimension, or something in a dream that moved without apparent effort, the Thing turned. The hood was thrown back off its face, and I could see a yellow visage, set in a horrible leer.



# Eyed BUDDHA

*was finally solved,  
that Oriental magic  
deviltries*

Moran and I stood motionless, regarding the figure that also stood without motion and with contempt in its luminous eyes. And suddenly I remembered where I had seen the like before. In the little temple on the hill above Bhangapore, when the priests of the one-eyed Buddha had filed in, they had worn enveloping cloaks and hoods like this one. And now that I thought of it, I could almost remember, it seemed to me, that this figure had been one of the procession of priests.

As we gazed at it, Moran as speechless as I, the figure turned and was off around the bend of the stairs—swiftly, but without apparent effort—moving with a peculiar, wave-like glide.

It was this that woke Moran from his apparently trance-like state.

"Hey, you!" he called after the figure and was off in quick pursuit, his right hand tugging at his hip-pocket. I ran after him, and together we rounded the bend where our nocturnal visitor had disappeared.

Around that bend in the hall was an iron ladder that led to the roof by way of a skylight that had to be pushed up.

Our visitor was already at the top of this ladder, having climbed with incredible speed, and was in the act of throwing the skylight aside.

"Stop!" yelled Moran.

The figure looked down for a moment and a faint, almost imperceptible smile seemed to slide across his age-old features. He made no slackening or diminution of his efforts. By this time Moran had disengaged his gun.

"Stop or I'll shoot!" he called.

The mysterious visitor smiled back, and disappeared on the roof before Moran had a chance to carry out his threat. Moran leaped up the ladder, and I was close on his heels—literally, for he nearly kicked me in the face as he ran up.

When he reached the top, our quarry was standing on the



*The next moment the figure stepped off the roof and seemed to float in the air*

very edge of the roof and gazing down in almost a contemplative fashion, as though he were unaware of our presence.

Moran leveled his wicked-looking automatic and took careful aim.

"Throw up your hands—you!" he called across to him.

The figure turned, arms folded across its breast. There was no word spoken, but I will never forget the majesty of his appearance as he stood there on the edge of the roof, in his flowing robes, silhouetted sharply by the silver moonlight. I could see that there was going to be no surrender—no throwing up of hands.

"Throw 'em up!" cautioned Moran again. "If they're not up when I say three, I'm going to let a little of this moonlight into you, *pronto!*"

There was no response.

"One!"

The figure produced something from its robe that flashed in the moonlight—a weapon of some kind.

"Two!" said Moran. "Remember, I warn you!"

Our visitor raised his weapon slowly in the air, and in the moonlight it flashed like gold. Suddenly I recognized it!

"The dagger!" I ejaculated.

It was the dagger of gold that had killed Sam, and had so mysteriously disappeared.

The robbed figure made a gesture with his hand, and for the instant it appeared to me—and Moran must have thought so, too—that he was going to throw it. It was that, I believe, that confirmed Moran in his subsequent action.

"THREE!" he said.

There was the staccato bark of a gun at my elbow. Moran had shot.

The figure was still motionless—contemptuous. Moran was nonplussed. There was another shot. With slow dignity the priest of the One-Eyed Buddha returned the dagger to his girdle and then raised his arms.

"He's going to jump!" I cried.

Moran dashed forward, and the red glare of his automatic showed again as he fired.

"Damn it!" exclaimed Moran. "I know I hit him!"

But the shot had no effect.

The next moment the figure stepped off the roof and seemed to float in the air. Even while we gazed in amazement, it disappeared.

We leaned over the edge of the roof, hardly knowing what to expect.

The courtyard below was lighted, but no figure lay on the stones. At one side, however, a man in a derby hat was looking up.

"Is that you, Sweeney?" called Moran.

"It's me, chief," called back the

detective who had been stationed in the rear of the house. "What's all the shootin' fer? Need any help?"

"Where's the bird who jumped off here?" asked Moran.

"What bird?" came back the response from the courtyard.

Bird, indeed, I thought. Well, if inadvertently named, for I could see there was no sign of him, and he had gone off as though he really had had wings.

"I just copped someone, and he jumped off here," persisted Moran.

"No one's come down this way," came back the reply. "You must be seein' things, chief."

We stared over the roof to the stone flagging without talking, for it was truly bewildering. What had happened to this figure?

"Well, that's past me," said Moran, and then he shouted down to Sweeney: "Stay on the job, and don't let the next one get by you—get me?"

"No one got by this time, chief," shouted back Sweeney. "I been here all the time," he added, with an injured air, and I knew he spoke the truth, for it was all of a piece with the rest that had occurred here tonight.

"All right," shouted Moran. "None of your lip, or I'll have you sent back to the force." He was angry at his own inability to understand what was happening.

"O.K., chief," came back the mystified and aggrieved voice of Sweeney. "I won't move outa here."

We stepped back from the edge of the roof and looked at each other in doubt and indecision.

"Are you satisfied now?" I demanded. "Maybe you'll believe a few of the things I've been telling you, after what you just saw here."

Moran raised his hat and began to mop the perspiration from his brow, looking puzzled and futile. I felt sorry for him, for he seemed up against the unbelievable if ever a man was. He spoke finally, looking me ruefully in the face.

"I'll never be able to make a report on this case," he said at last. "I've got about as much chance of being believed as you have of being made President of the University of Heidelberg, I guess. It was good shooting, too."

"You must certainly have missed him," I ventured.

"Missed nothing!" he came back. "I never miss at that distance—you may not know it, but I hold the departmental medal for shooting with this little toy." He waved the black, heavy-looking pistol in the air. "Missed him? I hit him three times, I tell you. The bullets went right through him. Here, look—do you see that place?"

He showed me where a bullet made a clean, round hole through a flue.

"Do you happen to remember that his body was just exactly in line with that there?"

"I think it was," I replied.

"Well, that's where my first shot landed, if you want to know. It didn't do anything to him—but it went right through that pipe. What do you think of that?"

I didn't know what to think of it. It was truly inexplicable. I believed that it was quite likely that Moran's aim had been true, and that he had not missed. Why not?

It was no stranger than the things I had seen myself.

"About my report," he continued — "how am I going to be able to say that I shot a bird in a cloak three times, hit him each time, and that he then flew off the roof like one of them there eagles? Now I ask you?"

He looked at me with an injured air, as though it was my duty to invent a likely story for him to tell at Headquarters.

"I'm sure I don't know, Moran," I said. "You have just as much chance of telling it as you have of telling the rest of the story, it seems to me."

"Is that the man without a head you were telling me about?" he asked.

I NODDED. "Yes, I'm pretty sure it's the same one. The figure was the same, and the face is the same as the one I saw up near the ceiling in that room."

"Well, he was material enough then, wasn't he?" he demanded. "There wasn't nothing spiritual about that bash on the bean he slipped you, now, was there?"

"I should say not," I said.

"I wonder who he was?" ruminated Moran aloud, gazing out into the blackness of the space on all sides of the roof.

"I couldn't say," I replied, "but I remember that I saw robes of that kind on the Buddhist priests in India—in Bhangapore, where the ruby came from." I looked at him significantly.

He was silent for a moment, and finally some connecting link in the matter seemed to register in his brain.

"So you think——" He looked at me for answer.

"I don't know exactly what to think," I returned. "Did you notice the knife he had in his hand?"

He nodded. "All gold, it seemed."

"Yes," I said. "I guess my eye is a trifle quicker than yours, because I noticed that that was the dagger that killed my secretary."

He looked at me with sudden ac- (Continued on page 59)

"A scream of mortal agony rent the still night air, the scream of one who is caught in a death-trap and knows there is no hope.

"My flashlight swooped upwards to the top of the sliding wall, and a terrible sight met my eyes In the aperture between wall and ceiling—"

# THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES

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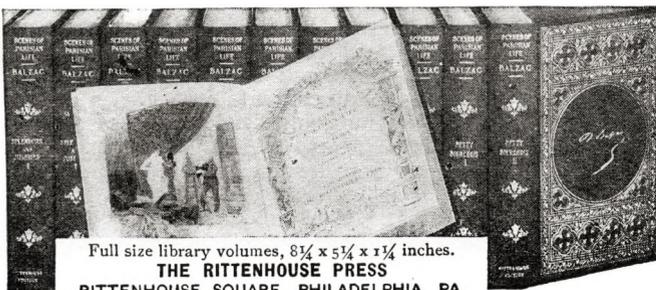
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# SPIRIT TALES

*Timely Topics of Current Interest*

By Count Cagliostro

ONE of the amazing illusions which the celebrated entertainer, Harry Houdini, offered the marveling public a few years before his death was his Haunted Brick Wall. For several seasons Houdini presented it in the principal vaudeville houses of the country; then he got something new, and the brick wall was wheeled off the stage. But to the patrons of "vodeveal" it was still a baffling mystery.

Yet its secret, as we shall presently disclose, is based upon a principle of the utmost simplicity.

When the curtain rose, the spectators beheld a brick wall, built on a little iron platform, on casters. The wall was about eight feet high, one brick deep, and nine feet long. The iron base on which it had been built was just a little wider than a brick, and was formed in a groove, so that the bottom row of bricks was held tightly.

This brick wall on wheels was standing at one side of the stage. The performer appeared and announced that the wall had been built by two of the city's champion bricklayers, who challenged him to pass his body from one side of it to the other without disturbing the bricks or mortar.

He announced that he had accepted the challenge.

Next he directed the attention of the spectators to the floor of the stage. In order to convince the skeptical that no traps were employed, a rug of oilcloth would be laid, so that traps were obviously out of the question. A big oilcloth was then spread on the stage, and a committee invited from the audience to step on the stage, to examine the oilcloth and see that no traps or cuts had been made in it, and to remain on the stage as witnesses to the entire proceedings.

The wall was next wheeled on to the oilcloth, and then subjected to minute inspection by the committee. It was an absolutely solid wall, free from suspicion, and built by bricklayers who knew their trade. Invariably the committee announced its faith in the integrity of the oilcloth and the wall. The committeemen were now asked to form a semi-circle around the wall, leaving only the part seen by the audience unguarded. The wall was set with one end toward the audience, the two sides of it facing the stage wings. The stage was then ready for the illusion.

The magician now stood on one side of the wall. A screen was placed around him. Directly on the other side of the wall another screen was placed. Pres-

ently the other screen was bowled over and there stood the magician—on the other side of the wall!

It had been done right under the eyes of the committeemen, and not one of them the wiser. They might examine the old brick wall forever, and not find a single clue to the mystery.

Yet, as we warned you at the outset, the solution was very simple. Regardless of all the evidence to the contrary, it is a fact that traps were used—one trap, at least—but in a most unsuspected way. And this is how:

There was a trap immediately beneath where the performer stood, running all the way over to the other side. As soon as both screens were in position, an assistant beneath the stage released the trap. Quite naturally, the oilcloth sagged down, leaving a little slit under the wall, through which the magician could crawl. The weight of the brick wall on the outer edges of the oilcloth held it firm under the sorcerer's weight as he crawled under. As soon as he got on the other side, the man under the stage replaced the trap, and all was as it was before.

**P**ATRONS of Gee Lee, a Chinese laundryman of Toronto, Canada, called the attention of the police to a sign on the door of Lee's place of business which read:

"Please rent laundry at once. I never come back here again."

Investigation developed the fact that the Chinaman's brother, Chin Lee, had died in the "washee house," and Gee Lee had gone to Hamilton to notify Chin's family of the sad event, leaving the body unattended in the room where he had passed to the Celestial's heaven.

In doing this—according to Fong Wong, another Chinaman—Laundryman Lee had simply followed a Chinese custom.

"Him afraid brudder's ghost come back," said Fong. "Him pack up, get out, sklidoo, fas', like fly machine. All Chinese afraid ghosts. Chinese work late, work night—sometime all night. What Chinese do—ghost he'll come—melk big noise—moo-oo!—like dat? Lee burn shirtee, burn han', run like hellee, no come back. Gee Lee him allight; we make fluneral, shuttee place, allee samee. Gee Lee, he no come back. He know, Gee Lee do."

**T**HEY have told character by the lines of the hand, by numerology as applied to your name, by the bumps of your head, and, most recently, by the shape and texture of your tongue. Here, now, is another one.

Even the moles on your face—or elsewhere—have a meaning!

We have it on the authority of the exponents of a new school of occultism.

There are few people who do not have a mole somewhere about their face, arms, or neck.

Of course, no one pretends that a mole on his chin is really going to affect his fate in any way. But because so many people do believe that there is some inner meaning to the little brown marks, a writer has listed a few of the popular superstitions regarding moles.

The moles on the right side of the face or body, or on the right arm, nearly always indicate good fortune, while those on the left are not so optimistic in prophecy.

A mole on the right corner of the mouth indicates to a man that he will have good fortune through his individual efforts. Whatever walk in life he chooses, he will be successful. To a woman it indicates that she will have plenty of money and be very much beloved.

A mole on the left side of the mouth indicates for both men and women a commonplace life, one in which neither good nor ill fortune will predominate.

A mole on the lower lip indicates that a man will be of a roving disposition. He will undertake many long and perilous adventures in foreign lands. To a woman this mole indicates that she will marry a foreigner and live out of her own country.

A mole on the upper lip indicates for both men and women varying health and inconstant fortune.

A mole on the right cheek indicates to either a man or woman a happy marriage, and that he or she will be greatly loved. A mole on the left cheek signifies a wandering life, and many adventures. In a woman this mole signifies unhappiness in love.

A mole in the middle of the chin indicates that a man will receive legacies from women. To a woman it shows that she will be happily married, but will have anxiety and worry connected with her children.

A mole on the right side of the chin is known as "the happy mole." It indicates, in either sex, that its possessor will have good fortune, a happy marriage, and a long life. In a man it also indicates intelligence.

A mole on the left side of the chin indicates to a man much worry and varying fortune. To a woman this mole indicates danger by water.

If you have not already gone to look in the mirror, now is the time.

I do not believe there is a molecule of truth in it.

LORD CHARLES HOPE, in some recent experiments at his London flat with a medium named Valiantine, produced with the co-operation of a gramophone company, a number of records of the voices that "came through." Some of the languages spoken purported to be ancient and modern Chinese, Hindustani, and Italian—all of which are said to be unknown to the medium.

The voices were taken through a microphone and along a telephone line especially engaged from the central station to the gramophone company's premises near by, where the records were successfully made. One of the voices alleged to be heard was that of Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, who died 478 B. C. Lord Charles is not con-

vinced that the voices are of spirit origin, though no evidence of fraud was discovered. Lord Charles is a member of the National Laboratory.

THE day of miracles is not past, according to spiritualists in Odense, the second largest provincial town in Denmark, and the birthplace of Hans Andersen.

Wonderful cures are alleged to be effected every week by the spirit of Brother Johannes, a Franciscan monk who died two hundred years ago. These weekly sances with Brother Johannes have been held in strict secrecy.

It is reported that a girl, who was blind from her eleventh year, had her eyes touched by the healing fingers of Brother Johannes, and that her eyesight

became normal immediately.

Cripples are said to have left their crutches behind and to have walked away with strong, healthy limbs.

ACCORDING to the Polish press, the bandits of Lodz, Poland's chief manufacturing town, are using hypnosis as a means of overcoming their victims. A Captain Paionk, on returning home, discovered that his house had been robbed and his wife was in such a deep sleep that he was unable to wake her. He summoned the police doctors, who found that she had been hypnotized. Artificial nourishment was administered because ordinary medical treatment failed to bring her round. It is said this is the seventh crime of the kind which has occurred in Poland recently.

## A Witness from the Bottom of the Lake

(Continued from page 23)

tion. It was striving to bring the girl and me together—and quickly. For what purpose, I couldn't even guess.

More than anything else I wanted to catch another glimpse of that white face, to make certain my imagination had not tricked me into making a false identification. Again I sent my car ahead; full speed. Closer and closer I came to the one ahead. But, just when I believed I would be able to move alongside, my quarry suddenly swung from the roadway, and dashed between two great stone gate-posts, topped with electric lamps. I followed. The phantom car again began to leave me behind, but remained in sight, racing up the gravel drive toward a lighted house.

Instinctively I sensed that I had reached Rosebriar. The car before me disappeared around a great clump of foliage. In seconds I, too, had reached the spot. But—the phantom driver and his automobile had vanished.

Numb with amazement, striving to recover my addled wits, I drove ahead mechanically. I reached the steps of the veranda, then jerked my car to a halt.

MY approach had been heard. Instantly the lights about the porch snapped on, the front doors were opened, and the figure of a woman—I knew it was Arlette—was silhouetted in the opening. In an instant I was beside her—had grasped her hands and gasped her name. It was all I could do to hold myself from stooping and kissing her.

"Thank God you've come, Edmond," trembled from her lips as she drew me inside and closed the doors.

Again I took her hands. They were icy cold; cold as I never had known them. But her features conveyed a greater shock. She was beautiful—perhaps more so than ever in the past. But the wonted color was absent from her cheeks; and her eyes were sunken, and rimmed with dark circles indicative of many hours of tense suffering. On the flash, I determined not to confide my maddening experience to her until I had learned all she had to tell.

For, I don't know how long, we looked full at each other, each striving to read the thoughts behind the masks our faces pre-

sented; each trying to see into the very soul of the other.

"Come," she said at last, clinging to me as if for physical protection, "let us go where we can be alone; where we can talk without possibility of being overheard."

As we passed the library, where we had spent so many happy hours, I made a movement as if to turn in there.

"No, no!" she gasped. "It was in that room"—I felt the shudder which passed over her—"that—I saw—what I wrote you."

The one into which she finally led me was her father's study. There I took an easy-chair facing the windows, and she sat quietly on the broad arm of the chair while she told me her story.

The conversation which followed was too sacred—to us—for me to repeat in detail. In brief, it was this: Arlette loved me; always had, from practically the first moment we met. This admission, which made me supremely happy and compelled me to crush her in my arms and kiss her madly, also caused me inwardly to curse my stupidity for not realizing the truth. She, of the three I had left behind, was the only one who had comprehended the reason for my act. And a realization of my motive had softened the blow of my going.

However, such grief as she had felt, she had kept so well concealed behind a show of forced gaiety that no others suspected. Walter was openly disconsolate because I had disappeared without confiding in him. To Cornish my act apparently caused satisfaction. He pressed his suit more ardently and, within a few weeks, asked Arlette to marry him. She refused. Not only did she not love him but, in a sense, she feared him. She believed him selfish, hard, and incapable of any feeling other than self-gratification. He accepted her refusal with an ill grace and, after a brusque farewell, disappeared.

It was not until some time later, after Walter apparently had become convinced that Arlette meant nothing to me, that he declared his love. He, too, was refused, though Arlette, who was very fond of him, tried to soften the sting of disappointment. Later she regretted that she had not told him bluntly of her love for me; that, no

matter whether I returned or not, it always would be the same. A week or two later, Walter also vanished, going to an unannounced destination. Then, for a long time, she heard nothing concerning him or Cornish. But, a few weeks previous, word had reached her by a roundabout course that the two were together at Blue Rocks, hunting and fishing. She began to describe how Walter's phantom had appeared to her.

MIDWAY in a sentence, Arlette stopped with a frightened gasp. She half rose and motioned with a trembling hand toward the nearest window. Looking, I, too, cried aloud, while my heart seemed fairly to stop beating.

Only a few feet away, standing just within the room, was my friend—or his phantom. Every feature of his boyish face was just as I remembered it—except its ghastly whiteness and its contorted expression. Suddenly he began to speak.

"Ed," the weird voice gasped, "find the paddle of my canoe."

Forgetful even of my sweetheart for the moment, I staggered to my feet.

"Walter, Walter!" I cried, and with arms extended ran toward him. But I touched nothing. Frantic with fear and amazement, I swung about. When I looked again, he was gone. Dully I heard Arlette sobbing, "You saw—you saw him. Now you must believe."

Fortunately I recovered my nerve quickly, despite the fact that this second glimpse of the shadowy form of Walter convinced me beyond all question that he was dead. That which I had seen—which Arlette had seen—was his phantom. But what could his strange message mean?

It was considerable time before my sweetheart recovered sufficiently for me to tell her how I had become lost in the wooded hills, and how the apparition of our friend had appeared out of the night's blackness and guided me to her. However, throughout the telling of my story, a subtle something kept urging me to get in touch with Cornish and question him. For a time I said nothing of this weird prompting—not until Arlette and I had discussed in whispers what we had seen, and had

speculated as to the fearful tragedy which lay behind our terrible experiences. But, when I did suggest that Cornish might be able to shed some light upon the matter, she said that we should endeavor to communicate with him without delay.

The telephone promised the speediest way, providing he were at Fernwood Lodge. I put in a long-distance call. Finally, after what seemed ages, the connection was made.

"Is that you, Nelson?" I asked.

The reply was affirmative. I failed to recognize the voice, no longer sharp and masterful, but weak and quavering.

"Who is it?" came the query.

"It is Edmond—Edmond Stetson."

I thought I caught a gasp of fright. "You—you, Edmond? In America? Where are you?"

"At Rosebriar."

"At Rosebriar. Is Arlette there?"

"Yes."

"Then, for God's sake, come to me—**A**t once! Something has happened. I need you—both." Next a click. He had hung up the receiver.

I repeated the conversation to Arlette and suggested that we go to Blue Rocks the first thing in the morning. She consented. But she asked no questions, and I said nothing more because I feared her nerves were at the breaking point.

After assisting her to her room, I staggered to the one that had been made ready for me, and dropped, dazed and exhausted, into a chair. My limbs were shaking and my head buzzed. I struggled hard to regain my composure, to think and reason, to guess what had befallen Walter and what Cornish knew. But it was no use, and I finally slumped back, utterly spent, and fell asleep. Afterward I learned that Arlette also had slept without removing her clothing.

Almost with the coming of daylight, Arlette and I hastened to the wharf, and a few minutes later were headed upstream in a speedy motor-boat. She handled the wheel and I sat close beside her. Throughout the journey, neither of us spoke. I was glad of this, for my brain was busy with what had occurred the night previous. Over and over again I speculated as to exactly what part Cornish was playing in the tragic adventure and, if he were a principal, as to whether he were guilty of any wrongdoing toward Walter. Should he be, I realized I faced a hard task to break his iron will and make him talk.

Finally we reached our destination, the long pier extending out into the river from the foot of Cornish's estate. He must have noted the boat's approach—probably through binoculars—for his chauffeur, with one of his cars, was at the wharf to meet us. I was both surprised and disappointed that Cornish was not there. I was burning up inside to meet him, to note his expression, to question him, eye to eye.

"Mr. Cornish said I was to bring you directly to the house," said the driver. We made no queries but entered the car, which carried us in a few moments to the mansion, high up in the hills.

At the door a servant met us and conducted us to the great room at the rear of the house; Cornish's favorite retreat, as attested by the arms in cases on all sides and the mounted trophies of the chase hanging upon the walls. We had no more than exchanged glances when Cornish

entered, muttering some unintelligible words of welcome. After shaking our hands limply, he motioned us to chairs and slumped weakly into another.

For a moment or two I was held dumb with amazement as I studied the man sitting there in the flood of morning sunlight. No longer was he the debonaire Cornish of my recollection. His clothes were awry and wrinkled, as if he had not removed them in days. And his hair was unkempt and matted—tangled strands hung over his forehead. His bronzed skin had turned a parchment yellow, he was unshaved, his mouth sagged, and his eyes seemed fairly to burn from the depths of blood-shot sockets.

"You—you've come to learn—about Walter?" he finally said thickly, flashing only a glance toward Arlette and then fixing his gaze upon me.

"Yes," I replied. "Where is he? What has happened to him?"

**A** SHUDDER shook his frame, which appeared to have become shrunken and stooped, and he seemed to have trouble finding his voice. With a supreme effort he pulled himself forward, then shot at me, "For God's sake, Edmond, let me tell it—in my own way. I'm half mad because of what has happened. For the first time in my life my nerve has gone back on me. I'll break, entirely, if I have to reply to questions."

"But we've got to know where he is. Do you know? Is he here?"

"No. He is gone—away—for good."

I heard a faint cry from the girl, but kept my eyes focused upon Cornish. "You don't mean—the worst?"

His lids drooped, and he nodded dully. "Yes. He is dead!"

I looked toward Arlette. Her face had gone white, and she seemed to be fighting for breath. But her eyes burned with anger—or hate—and I noted her hands were clenched. Cornish was looking at me again. I fancied there was a bit of color in his cheeks—that he had regained a bit of his nerve—once he had admitted the fearful truth.

"Listen, please, carefully, and then you will understand. I am to blame only indirectly; if at all. I shall be brief. Then I must rest a bit—from the strain. I haven't slept—for days."

The remainder of his story, told with gasps, was this. Following his rejection by Arlette, he had gone into retirement at Fernwood Lodge. Months later, Walter had come there, stating he had quarreled with Arlette and asking if he could remain for a time. They had fished and hunted together, but seldom had left the estate and had had no visitors. Just a few days back they had started out on a fishing excursion on the great lake at the rear of the estate. Cornish had used a rowboat, as usual, while Walter, as was his custom, had paddled a canoe.

I started, uncontrollably. The phantom's words flashed through my mind, but I did not understand—yet. The solution of the riddle seemed farther off than ever.

Instead of crossing the lake directly, Cornish continued, they had skirted the south shore in the shade. As they approached the point where the lake had its outlet over a fall of some seventy-five feet, Walter's paddle broke, and he and his canoe were carried below. Cornish, driven frantic by

the accident, had searched for his friend and failed—failed even to recover his body.

Crazed with grief, he explained, it was not until the following day that he recovered sufficiently to notify the authorities. An official search was then made, but was discontinued after twenty-four hours. Each day since, however, his own employes had labored steadily throughout the daylight hours in an effort to locate the body.

The tragedy and the subsequent strain, he said, had all but wrecked his reason. He added that he had admitted to the authorities that he and Walter had been drinking heavily for weeks, and they had expressed doubts concerning his story. Their contention was that Walter had quarreled with his host and departed in a huff. It was because of this, I guessed, that my friend's disappearance had not been noted in the newspapers.

When Cornish recovered a measure of composure, he suggested we go and learn if any of the searching parties had made a discovery. Arlette desired to accompany us. But I persuaded her to go to the room Cornish had placed at her disposal, and obtain some much-needed rest.

He and I headed directly for the lake. On the pier he pointed out the boat he had used. The canoe, he said, must have sunk or been carried to the river. It was on the tip of my tongue to ask if the paddle had been found, but something warned me to be silent.

We saw some of Cornish's men near by, and they reported the body had not been found. Next, we traversed the shore line around to the falls and scrambled down the steep banks with the aid of trees and rocks. At the foot a number of laborers were at work examining the rocks, which caused a mile of whirlpools, in the hope that the body was wedged against one of these. They reported finding nothing.

**A**FTER remaining for a time with Cornish, during which there was little conversation, I struck off alone down along the bank of the rushing stream, thinking that by some chance I might succeed where others had failed. I had proceeded a considerable distance, frequently examining the places where driftwood had collected in the rushes, and subconsciously puzzling over the weird events of the night before, when I was startled to hear my name called. Before me stood an old man, one of Cornish's employes, who frequently in the distant past had acted as guide to Walter and me, when we had hunted and fished about the place in the owner's absence.

"Listen and don't talk loud," he said, coming close and speaking in a hoarse whisper. I noted his hands were behind his back. "Will you promise not to repeat what I tell you—not to tell anyone where you got your information?"

"Yes," I replied, wondering if the veteran knew anything concerning the mystery which tormented me.

"I saw you when you left the master, and followed you. I know you loved Mr. Walter. And you both were kind to me. I found this, near the shore yonder, the day after he was drowned." A hand came from behind him, and he held out the blade of a canoe paddle, the upper portion snapped off. "It was Mr. Walter's. See!" he pointed to the splintered end.

With bulging eyes, I noted that the handle had been sawed halfway through. A trace

of glue indicated how the damnable act had been concealed.

The full realization of Cornish's plot, and the meaning of the phantom's message burst upon me.

"Good God," I gasped, "this was done deliberately. When Walter was swept toward the falls and applied real pressure, the handle snapped—"

"I don't know. Think what you please. But I had to tell you—his best friend. Remember your promise. If you don't, I, too, will be killed." Then he disappeared into the shrubbery.

I must have stood for hours, looking at the evidence of a man's treachery—Cornish's treachery, beyond question. He had resorted to murder to rid himself forever of the lad. Recalling his vindictive, determined nature, as he had shown it many times abroad, I was certain of his guilt. He had disbelieved Walter's tale that he and Arlette had quarreled—or, perhaps, he had believed it, but feared they would become sweethearts again, probably marry. So, figuring I need be given no further consideration, he had gone to extremes to remove the one he considered his only rival.

At last, I concealed the paddle blade in a hollow log. I would need it later when I had determined how I could break Cornish down completely and force him to confess. I resolved to move slowly until I matured a plan which could not fail. Also, I decided to tell Arlette nothing of what I had learned. When I returned to the house, my sweetheart was waiting for me. Cornish was not there. And, though we watched for him all afternoon, talking of everything but the fearful matter which thumped in our brains, he did not come; not until evening, when a sudden darkening of the skies sent all the searchers scurrying for cover.

**D**INNER was late. By the time Cornish had shaved and changed into a less rumpled suit, it was pitch-black outside, except for occasional flashes of lightning, and the rain had begun to fall in torrents. Cornish ordered all food placed upon the table, then dismissed the servants. The meal proceeded in silence, no one eating much.

Cornish had just removed most of the dishes and was preparing to pour the coffee, when a long glass door, opening upon a veranda, suddenly flew wide. Believing it had been blown by the wind, I arose to close it. Instantly there came a burst of laughter from just outside—hideous laughter, which rooted me in my tracks. I saw nothing. Then came a smothered cry from Arlette and a rasping oath from Cornish.

"Look out, Ed!" Cornish shrieked. His features twitching fearfully. "It's coming again! It's behind you!" He snatched up a heavy dish from the table.

Though I hated the man as I never had hated a mortal, his agony for the moment moved me.

"There's no one there," I said. "It was only the storm."

But suddenly he shrieked, "You lie!" and sent the dish crashing through the glass. Coincident with the crash, he turned and raced for his room.

I carried Arlette half fainting to her room. There she compelled me to remain until nearly midnight. I begged her repeatedly to leave Fernwood Lodge with me at once, but she refused, insisting she would remain until Walter's body was recovered. What

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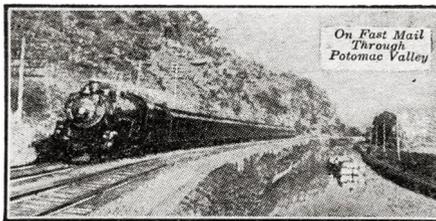
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ther things we talked about in those awful hours, I never could recall.

At last she felt calm enough to sleep, and I left her, after she had promised to keep all doors and windows closed throughout the night. I left the lights burning in the hallway. I knew I should not be able to close my eyes—at least for hours—and so went to the study, to think, to try to marshal my thoughts in some order, and to decide upon my next move. But intensive thinking was beyond me. Every few minutes I found myself staring at the windows, against which the rain now pattered gently—wondering if the phantom of Walter would again appear and straining my ears for a repetition of that awful laugh.

**A** LAST weariness overcame me: I dozed. How long I slept, I never knew. Suddenly I was awakened by a series of fearful cries and the sounds of a terrific struggle from somewhere above, in the hallway.

Thinking only of Arlette, that she might be in danger, I dashed to the stairway. But I paused on the first step, aghast with horror. Directly above me, at the top of the long flight, Cornish was struggling in the arms of a man at whom he was hacking wildly with a knife.

I cried for help and forced myself to move forward. Then, with a suddenness which set every nerve in my body a quiver, I recognized Cornish's antagonist. It was Walter—or his phantom. He had loosened Cornish's grip and sunk his fingers into his neck, choking him. As I swayed, unable to take another step, I saw Cornish's body sag, and the next instant it came hurtling down the steps and bumped past me as I crouched closer to the wall.

Then I saw servants coming from all directions. I looked above. The specter was gone. But Arlette was leaning over the railing. "For God's sake, go back to your room," I cried. She disappeared.

A moment later I was among those clustered about their master's body at the foot of the steps. Stooping, I examined the body closely. Cornish was stone dead. And upon his throat were the red welts left by the fingers which had throttled him.

"A burglar has killed him," I gasped.

"Telephone for a doctor and the police. Take—the body—into the library, some of you. The others come with me."

Up the stairway we raced. Arlette stood in the doorway of her room. "Go inside and remain there," I cried, grasping her arm. "Cornish has met with an accident. I have sent for a doctor. Don't come out unless I send for you."

Quickly the servants and I tried all the doors on that floor. All opened readily. A search revealed no one, no windows unlatched. We went to the floor above. The door of one chamber—which I was informed was an old storeroom to which only Cornish possessed a key—refused to yield. We burst it open. By match-light I located a switch and snapped it, flooding the room with light.

And there, stretched upon its back, lay the body of Walter Hills, clad in the clothing I had been told he wore when he entered his canoe the morning he was last seen alive. And his garments, his matted hair, everything about him, indicated he had been in the water.

**L**ATER I learned that I had fainted and the servants carried me from the room. The doctor, who arrived soon after with some of the town authorities, restored me to consciousness. I did not tell them the truth. I said only that Cornish had sent for Arlette and me to be with him until the body of Walter, our mutual friend, was recovered; that I had been in the study reading when I heard cries and ran into the hallway to find the master of the house lying dead, the welts upon his throat indicating he had been strangled; that the servants had assisted me in searching for an intruder and that we had discovered Walter's body in an up-stairs storeroom.

My nerves were so upset that I was not compelled to return to the room where the tragic find had been made, and Arlette was not disturbed. I waited for the doctor's report in a fever of uncertainty, utterly unable to make any sense of the situation. What he told me did nothing to clear matters or to banish my horror or uncertainty. He stated positively that Walter had been dead for many days, fully as long

as from the time Cornish had reported his drowning. Also, that he had not been drowned, but had been killed, when going over the falls, when his head struck a rock, fracturing his skull at the base of the brain.

How Walter's body got into the house, how Cornish had met his death, never was explained to anyone's satisfaction. Finally, long after the bodies of the two unfortunates had been laid away, the authorities dismissed further investigation of the case with shrugs. Probably they, like everyone else, were compelled to believe that something of a nature beyond human explanation had happened. None ever learned the truth from Arlette or me. That Walter's phantom had been seen by us remained our secret. However, from the night of the finding of the bodies, Fernwood Lodge became known far and wide as a haunted house. None has lived in it since. Today the stretches of lawns and fields surrounding it are overgrown with weeds, and the once splendid structure is a mass of ivy-grown stone and brick, with boarded doors and windows.

No, the specter of Walter never again appeared to either Arlette or myself. And, following our marriage, which took place a few weeks after we had left Blue Rocks for all time, we refrained from speaking of that awful chapter of our past.

However, I have thought over the matter thousands of times. Still I cannot offer a reasonable explanation of what occurred. Only one guess have I been able to make with which I am satisfied. It is that, after Walter was killed, Cornish recovered his body and hid it in the brush until dark. Then he carried it to the mansion and up a rear stairway, unobserved, and hid it in the old storeroom. Such actions would account for his neglect to notify the authorities promptly.

How he expected to rid himself of the body ultimately, I have no idea. And I don't know why I was permitted to witness the killing. Perhaps it is possible that Cornish had gone mad that night, and was on his way to kill me, when the phantom intercepted him. But what's the use of further speculation? What happened, simply cannot be explained.

## How I Foretold the Fates of Great Men

(Continued from page 31)

versation the time went on until the stew was ready. It was poured out into two dishes, and there and then I sat down with His Majesty opposite me at a small table. I can honestly say it was the most perfect Irish stew I have ever tasted. It was a curious introduction to a séance with Royalty.

Afterwards we returned into the smoking-room again—for such I found it was—and after he had pressed me to have something to drink, he said:

"Now, Cheiro, I want you to examine my hands and tell me what you can. I have heard, too, from several sources of your remarkable skill in predictions of death-days, and important dates in life. I want you to tell me of any striking events that you see and anything that portends in the near future."

As he uttered these words, the King's

manner became very serious; I felt he realized that the shadow of "The End" was creeping over his long reign and that he half dreaded, yet longed, to peer into the "Future all unknown."

With this he laid his strong, masterful hands upon a small cushion and remained absolutely silent while I made a careful examination of the characteristic lines. Seventy years of crowded life seemed indexed on the right palm; while on the left I saw graven the hereditary pointers that told their own tale of the impulses, ups and downs, and physical weaknesses that are just as visible on the palm of Royalty as on any other hand.

He was the son of a King known as the "beloved Uncle of Queen Victoria" (Leopold I), and he inherited to the full the peculiarities of the Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld dynasty—proud, obstinate, strong in love

and in hate. I must confess that as I studied the maze of lines that confronted me, I became fascinated with my subject, until at last I involuntarily exclaimed:

"A wonderful hand! *It holds what it grasps.*"

"No flattery," replied the King sternly. "Sir," I said, "were your hand that of a peasant, I should say the same." And I explained to him the salient lines were clear and sharply defined, and showed a very remarkable *acquisition*. It need hardly be explained that the King's conduct of the Belgian Congo exploitation has been acknowledged to be a masterpiece of high finance.

"But tell me," he said, "my physical weaknesses."

As briefly as I was able, I explained that the indications pointed to a strong brain, remarkable lung development, a sound

nervous system, while the circulation was above normal. Parenthetically, I may state that it is beyond dispute that upon the palm of the hand is graved a chart of health.

"Quite sound then, Cheiro?" he questioned, fixing his imperious eyes upon my face.

I paused. For I saw written there the fatal defect which I knew must soon bring the Royal frame down to the dust of dissolution.

"If there is a weakness," I said diplomatically, "it lies in the digestive system."

"No, no!" he countered emphatically. "You are wrong, Cheiro—I can eat anything."

I let it pass and went on to other matters, but when two years later, on the 17th of December, death called for the King at his palace, the official bulletin gave the cause of dissolution as a complete breakdown of the digestive organs and bowel obstruction.

I pass over the matter of his various love-affairs, and the dark cloud that settled over his domestic affairs. Few monarchs have been more cursed in their matrimonial life than Leopold II. His Austrian wife was estranged from him; his heir, the Duke of Hainaut, died of consumption; his daughter, Stephanie, was involved in the tragedy of Meyerling whereby her husband committed suicide; while in his later days none of his children would come near him.

"What are my years?"

This was the next question shot out in his commanding voice.

I KNEW that the birth date of His Majesty was April 9th, 1835, and had made the calculations necessary for divining the predominating position of the planets when he came into the world. The prevailing influences were favorable for success in business undertakings, but decidedly unfavorable for matters of the affections—Venus was in bad aspect to Saturn. According to my computation, the figure "9" was the key numeral in the life of His Majesty of Belgium. It would take up too much space to show how astoundingly this figure dominated his whole existence, just as "6" and "9" were the overruling figures of King Edward.

I was certain that 1909 was King Leopold's "fatal year," and it seemed probable that his death would occur at the end of the year, as the planetary conditions then would be unfavorable to a person suffering with digestive troubles. I asked him pointblank if he wished me to give an opinion.

"Yes," he said. "Why not?"

I then said:

"I should predict 1909 as being a year of great import to your physical health and the greatest care should be taken."

I may here observe that, while I believe a man's Fate is, as the Eastern saying puts it, "bound invisibly about his forehead when he enters this Vale of Tears," yet it is possible with care to avoid the ill effects of unfavorable conjunctions of the planets. Thus, I warned W. T. Stead, years before his death by drowning, that a certain year was highly dangerous to him should he be traveling by water. He laughed and said: "Don't you know, Cheiro, that I am to die at the hands of a London mob?" This was a fixed idea of his; and I have often wondered whether, in that solemn moment when he saw death approaching in the waves that waited to engulf the sinking *Titanic*, he

remembered the prediction I had made.

Leopold brushed aside my prediction concerning 1909; for he was nervously sensitive upon the subject of his health. In December, 1909, on the tenth of the month, I happened to be turning through my notes of this interview at Laeken, and observed to a friend in London: "I should not be surprised if there is news of the death of a Continental monarch before long, and I believe it will be the King of Belgium." At the time there was no hint that Leopold II was failing; in fact, the official newspaper reports gave his health as excellent. But on the fifteenth came news that he was ailing; on the seventeenth he died suddenly. The post-mortem revealed the cause of death to be bowel trouble.

I cannot reveal all the conversation that followed. It has been said that Leopold II was a harsh father and a hard taskmaster to his Congo workers. But I may chronicle that he found abiding happiness in his companionship with the Baroness Vaughan—some recompense after the extraordinarily unhappy scenes that made up his married life and that culminated in his quarrels with most of his family.

After an interview lasting nearly two hours, we were interrupted by the appearance of a short, stout, remarkably handsome lady to whom I was introduced—the Baroness Vaughan. Leopold was said to have gone through a marriage ceremony with this lady some time before; but as the ceremony was not recognized by the Belgian Parliament, she was not regarded as Queen; it is not correct, however, to call the match a morganatic marriage. She was a very great comfort to the monarch in his declining days and was with him to the last.

THE Baroness displayed the liveliest interest when she gathered who I was and was very anxious to know how many years I gave "His Majesty to live." This banter did not please Leopold. His brow darkened and he turned the subject by asking me to see if there was anything in the hand of the Baroness that indicated "another love-affair for her." She submitted her hand with a merry laugh.

It was a delicate situation. For I saw in a flash that the Baroness was fated to have yet another marriage before her life was finished; that after her kingly lover was laid away in his ancestral vault, she would experience a veritable Saint Martin's Summer of tender passion with another lover. I said as guardedly as possible:

"I think there are several more years of happiness left to you, Baroness."

A thundercloud seemed to brood over his brow and he said abruptly to the Baroness: "This is all foolishness. I have private matters to discuss with Cheiro. Withdraw, I beg of you."

Upon this the Baroness disappeared. But it is now a matter of history that after the death of Leopold she contracted a marriage with her steward.

After this, Leopold discussed with me my system of numbers and lucky and unlucky days. He disclosed that he was a shrewd speculator on the Stock Exchange and wanted to know if he had lucky and unlucky days. I explained to him exactly which would be the more favorable times for matters connected with money, and he carefully noted down all I told him.

I left Leopold II, feeling that I had been in the presence of a very remarkable man,

who possessed qualifications that would have made him successful in many walks of life had he not been born beneath the Purple. He had a clear brain, great power of concentration, inflexible will amounting to hardness, and real gifts of diplomacy. Against this must be set his predilection for the fair sex, which caused his frequent visits to Paris in his later days to amount to a scandal. In this connection I cannot forbear touching upon a rather interesting visit I had from a lady whose name is still remembered with affection.

I was in my apartments at Paris one morning when I received a visit from a heavily-veiled lady. On examining her hands, I saw certain lines that I may call "Royal" in the sense that they are invariably found upon the palm of those called to inhabit the palace or in some way to be associated with kings. I was frankly puzzled by these lines because they seemed so contradictory. At last I said:

"Madame, there must be considerable perplexity in your mind at the present time, for you have excited interest in the hearts of two men, who are both much older than yourself, and who have the means to gratify their wishes."

I hesitated and she said in a singularly sweet voice:

"Do not shrink, Cheiro, from telling me everything."

"I believe that each of these two men wears a crown. I believe also that you have repulsed them both."

She removed her hands from the cushion and put them up to her veiled face. Then she said in a low voice:

"My name is Gaby Deslys. You know all about me by repute"—at this time she was making a triumphant success at the *Folies Bergeres* in Paris—"and I have had invitations to supper from both King Carlos of Portugal and King Leopold of Belgium. I do not wish to seem discourteous or refuse what is practically a command. But I wonder if trouble will come out of it?"

The more I studied the palms of this talented dancer, the greater was the sense of sadness I experienced. For here was one of those radiant creatures of sunlight, born to delight thousands, and yet as surely doomed to sadness and premature death. All those who knew this enchanting woman intimately, know that she was singularly unselfish and anxious to help everyone who was in trouble. But Death beckoned her away in the zenith of her career.

I SAW, too, that here was one of those women destined to cause the formation of events of far-reaching importance. Upon her palm were graven signs of international importance. It is no secret that the open rivalry between Carlos of Portugal and Leopold of Belgium as to which could shower the greatest attention upon Gaby Deslys when she rose to triumphant fame, was most unfavorably commented upon in the press of these countries. The assassination of Carlos and his heir marked the culmination of this revulsion of feeling toward the House of Braganza. Gaby Deslys was one of those lovely but "fatal" women born to set in motion many ripples leading to trouble. Yet she herself was as unsophisticated as a child.

One of my most disconcerting encounters with crowned heads was my first command appearance before the late Shah of Persia, that eccentric monarch who stayed at Buck-

ingham Palace and astounded the guests at a State Banquet by wiping his nose upon the flowing robe worn by Queen Victoria, upon whose right hand he sat.

How I came to meet the Persian ruler makes an interesting story. While working out the "fatal years" of various crowned heads, I noted that a danger period for King Humbert coincided with one for Mozaffer-ed-Din, "Supreme Ruler of the Universe," better known as the Shah of Persia.

I made the statement that if my numbers proved correct in the case of King Humbert, then one might expect about the same date an attempt on the life of the Shah.

At this time the Shah was paying a visit to Paris accompanied by his Grand Vizier. By some means my prediction reached the ears of the latter, and he lost no time in bringing it to the notice of his master.

In due course the tragic news came of the assassination of King Humbert by Bresci, the anarchist. Hardly had I heard the intelligence before I received a visitor in my consulting-room.

WITHOUT stating who he was, he introduced himself as a Persian who was greatly interested in predictions and the occult.

"I have heard," he said, "of your remarkable prophecy of the death of King Humbert"—the newspapers were full of it—"and it is said that you have also predicted danger to the Shah of Persia. Is this true?"

I thereupon said that, so far as my art revealed, danger of a very serious sort threatened the Shah. I said further that if he knew any of the suite surrounding the Shah, I hoped he would warn the monarch so that every precaution might be taken.

I did not know until afterwards that, upon leaving, my visitor went straight to Monsieur Lepine, the Chief of the Paris Police, and asked for a double guard of detectives to watch the residence of the Shah and to "shadow" him when he went out. It was, in fact, this extra guard that saved the Shah's life when Salson, another anarchist, attempted to assassinate him soon afterwards.

Two days after the attempt the Persian stranger called upon me again and this time he revealed himself as the Grand Vizier. He had his hands examined and prints taken, and gave me an autographed impression that I have before me as I write. He told me that his imperial master had been profoundly impressed by my prediction and was most grateful for my timely warning. Further, he had commanded that I should be brought before him the following evening at five o'clock.

It was arranged that I should call at the Palais des Souverains where the Shah had been installed by the French Government, and at the appointed hour I presented myself before the lordly mansion where the ruler of Persia was in residence. I will confess that I felt a little trepidation at having to face a monarch whose peculiar foibles had been well advertised during his European tour; however, I determined to keep myself well in hand and to treat him exactly as though he were an ordinary caller in my consulting-room.

I was struck forcibly by the silence—the almost unearthly silence—of the vast mansion when I was admitted, and was

waiting in a small antechamber for the momentous interview. The servants, in Persian national costume, moved upon velvet feet; great rugs and carpets deadened all sound. Then, suddenly, the silence was ended by the most exquisite, bird-like song I have ever heard; the voice was like that of a singer in the Paradise of the Blest. It was entrancing. When the song was finished, I realized I had been holding my breath with sheer delight.

I learned afterwards that the singer was one of the Persian wives of the Shah who had accompanied him on his European tour. It was her custom to sing to him every evening to ward off the attacks of melancholy that seized him.

Soon afterwards I was received by Amin-es-Sultan, the Grand Vizier, the man whom I have already mentioned—a very remarkable personality who was mainly responsible for the reorganization of Persia in 1900 when a British loan was floated in London. The Grand Vizier gave me a few hints as to my deportment upon being ushered into the presence of the Shah, and added in excellent French:

"His Imperial Majesty is somewhat difficult today! On no account differ with him."

WE ascended a noble staircase and came out upon a wide landing covered with lovely carpet. To my amazement, however, it was stained with blood in several places. Thoughts of some dark tragedy darted through my mind, and I began to wonder what was in store for myself if I should arouse the ire of this capricious monarch. It did not dawn upon me until afterwards that the morning sacrifice of the black cock, as prescribed by the Shah's religion, accounted for the blood-stains. It will be recalled that when the previous Shah left Buckingham Palace, after his famous state visit to Queen Victoria, his apartments were in such a condition that it took many days to remove the blood-stains, et cetera.

I found the Shah seated on a small gilt Louis XVI settee. He was dressed in Persian costume and was wearing a black fez ornamented with an enormous gem. He was at this time about sixty years of age, rather small in stature, with sharp features, and keen, black eyes. His expression was remarkably dignified. For some minutes after I entered, he took no notice of my presence. I remained standing, rather awkwardly, wondering what I ought to do next.

When he addressed me, our conversation was carried on in French, of which I venture to render a translation:

The Shah: "Well, Magician, I have heard of you. My people tell me it was owing to your words that the Fool the other day failed in his purpose. They say you are a wizard and can read the Future."

Cheiro: "I have had some success, Your Majesty."

The Shah: "In some ways, doubtless. But I have traveled and learned a great deal. I have my own Wise Men in Teheran, and one of them travels with me."

Upon this he indicated a Persian who stood at some distance. After some further conversation, the Shah stretched out his hands and laid them upon a cushion placed upon a small table. While I was studying them, I could feel his quizzical eyes boring into my inmost soul.

They were remarkable hands and the lines were distinctive of a man who was at once weak and strong in will; swayed by self and yet easily led; crafty and yet simple—in short, a bundle of temperamental contradictions. I told him this as carefully as I could, and he listened with the keenest attention. I also explained the Fate lines and emphasized that certain evil influences which had been threatening him were passing away.

I felt I was making good progress, when all of a sudden my imperial client pulled me short.

Tugging his long mustache, as if to conceal a smile, he turned to his Grand Vizier, and said something in Persian. This I could not understand. Speaking in French, the Grand Vizier said:

"Cheiro, his Imperial Majesty says that all you have told him might have been read in a book dealing with his life that anyone could have access to. But to make a final test of your powers, he propounds this question: Can you tell him exactly what is happening at Teheran, his capital, at this moment? Your statement will be tested by a cable sent off at once. Speak, Cheiro, for the Shah commands."

Bowing dutifully, I desired from the Shah some personal object that I might hold in my hand. He immediately gave me a small silk handkerchief plucked from his breast. Crushing this in my palm, I closed my eyes and with all my force of will concentrated.

FOR a few seconds—and it seemed like an age—I found my mental canvas a hopeless blank. It seemed to me that a dry, chuckling laugh issued from the sarcastic lips of the ruler of Persia. And then, suddenly—how, I cannot explain—a picture formed with startling distinctness before my inward sight. I did not hesitate any longer. Opening my eyes and looking full at the Shah, I said:

"Your Majesty, grave events are happening in Teheran, your capital, this very hour! The governor of the city has been thrown into jail by the mob on account of serious food riots that have raged for several days. He is in danger of being a victim to the rage of the people against the price of bread and fish.

The Shah gave a gasp of astonishment, and then his face grew a shade darker.

Half rising from his settee, he said loudly: "You know nothing! You are an impostor. What you say is impossible in my kingdom. Go!" And I found myself being ushered out of the room by a rather scared-looking Grand Vizier.

I returned to my consulting-rooms with mixed emotions. I felt convinced that my clairvoyant picture mirrored the truth. And yet—supposing that it did not?

The next day a Persian aide-de-camp rushed into my rooms. He seemed laboring under an unusual degree of excitement.

"Come at once, Cheiro," he almost shouted, and began to drag me towards my coat and hat. "His Majesty the Shah wants you immediately."

I must confess that my heart sank. But not a word further could I get out of the officer.

I was ushered into the presence of the ruler. As soon as I entered, the Shah inclined his head to me gravely, while at the same time I noticed he held a cable in his hand.

"Cheiro," he said with infinite courtesy, "I have done you an injustice. You are—wonderful!"

And then he read a cable from his capital, in response to one sent the day previously. It announced that the governor had overtaxed the people on their wheat and fish, that a revolution had broken out, and that he was in prison. The advice of the Grand Vizier was requested.

Congratulations showered about my ears. It was a triumph.

I treasure among my possessions a decoration bestowed upon me by the grateful Shah Mozoffer-ed-Din, an exquisite piece of workmanship, the Lion and Sun of Persia.

AT this second interview the Shah desired that I would work out my system of numbers as relating to his life. He gave me his birth date, March 25th, 1853, and in due course I worked out a chart of his days. According to this, he ran a grave danger of assassination. He had succeeded his father when the latter had fallen a victim to a fanatic who had imbibed anarchistic ideas. It was remarkable how fatal was the figure "2" in the life of the Shah. The attempt to assassinate him in Paris occurred on August 2nd.

In glancing through my notes connected with the Shah, I am reminded of a very sinister client who called upon me the day following.

On the afternoon in question, a handsome-looking man was announced. He was garbed in the height of fashion, carried a top hat, and exhaled expensive scent. I judged him to be a rich Frenchman.

After a few words he asked me to read his future and he stretched out a pair of singularly beautiful hands upon the cushion. I examined them carefully. While so doing, I was conscious of a growing feeling of hostility to this well-spoken, dapper gentleman. Why? I could not say. But after a few moments I looked into his face and said:

"I make it a rule to be absolutely honest with my clients. If I cannot get on terms of sympathy with them, I am powerless to sense the future as I would wish to do. Shall I go on?"

The gentleman gave a peculiar smile. He said softly:

"Cheiro, I came here because I have faith in your powers. Be open with me. Tell me what you see."

It was just at that moment I saw in his palm a line that filled me with consternation. I have seen it before—yes, I have seen it even in the hand of a beautiful woman. I have marked it in the shapely palm of a famous doctor, whose last days were spent in the hospital of Sing Sing

prison, New York. *It is the murderer's mark.*

While these thoughts were coursing through my mind, my caller said:

"Cheiro, I am about to be married to a lovely young girl. Tell me—will her life be long and shall I find happiness in this match?"

How can I account for the sensation that filled my mind at these words! For I realized, in a fashion beyond doubt, that I was face to face with one of life's enigmas—the calculating murderer.

"There is written in your hand a message of Fate that is a very terrible one," I said slowly, wondering in what words to clothe my message. "You know yourself better than I do. I see that you are loved by a woman and I see, too, that your happiness will be short-lived. As to the reason, perhaps that rests with you."

His face grew pale, and his peculiar eyes glittered with a sinister luster. I felt that my shaft had struck home; but brushing aside my remarks as applied personally, my visitor began to speak of great criminals, of whom he evidently possessed a rare knowledge. Particularly he dilated upon the crime of Pranzini, the scented dandy who made love to innumerable women and afterwards destroyed them; he spoke, too, of Lugi, the Italian murderer, who married his intended victims and then slowly tortured them to death.

After occupying my attention for about half an hour, my caller signed his name, "Philip Laroche," in my book and added a compliment as to my skill. I felt an indescribable sense of relief when he was gone. I reflected, too, that perhaps I had been inclined to be too severe with him—that at the worst he was but a man of abnormal temperament—and I hoped he would fight against any evil instincts.

About three months later, Marseilles, and indeed all France, was startled by a terrible crime. A young lady, married three weeks, was found in a trunk, the corpse having been cruelly mutilated. The hue and cry was out for the husband. His name was given as Henri Dupont. In a few days he was captured and interrogated. With a thrill of excitement I saw his real name given—Philippe Henri Laroche—and from the published pictures I easily recognized him as my visitor with the murderer's mark upon his palm!

*One of Cheiro's most sensational interviews was with Edward VII, King of England and master diplomat. The story could not have been told during the life of this monarch. But the great seer now feels free to lift the veil for readers of the next issue of GHOST STORIES—dated January—on the news-stands November 23rd.*



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## Thanks to Miss Laura La Plante

The September and October covers of GHOST STORIES Magazine were based upon photographs especially posed by Miss Laura La Plante, the Universal Pictures star. Through an oversight, credit was not given to her on the contents pages of those issues.

We take this opportunity to thank both Miss La Plante and The Universal Pictures Corporation.

# TRUE GHOST EXPERIENCES

*Have you ever seen a ghost? Have you ever had a message from the dead?*

*Nearly every person has had some experience which could be classed as psychic. Not everyone would recognize a ghost, or would understand a message or warning that purports to come from another world—but most people have had at least one thing happen which could not be explained logically.*

*This department is for readers of GHOST STORIES Magazine who believe they have had some contact with the spirit world.*

*Write in and tell us what you have experienced. If you give a full account of a really remarkable happening—such as the one printed below—we may accept it to lead the department in some future issue. In that case, it would be paid for at a fair rate.*

*But we shall publish, also, extracts from the more interesting letters received. We do not undertake, editorially, to solve "supernatural" problems, but we want to put our readers in touch with others all over the world who are interested in the subject. Correspondents may answer each others' questions through this department, which is to be a clearing-house of psychic knowledge and a friendly meeting place for spiritualists.*

*GHOST STORIES wants the account of your experience. Send it to True Ghost Experiences Editor, GHOST STORIES Magazine, 1926 Broadway, New York, N. Y.*

## Am I the Victim of Hallucination? By Alfred ——— As told to Eva Joy Betterley

OUT of the night she came to me. "Alfred, I know I hear a kitten crying," my mother said to me that evening as we sat in the library of our home. "Do go and see. It is too cold to leave any creature outside."

I, too, had heard the faint mew, and hastened to open the French doors that gave on a wide portico. The light streamed out and shone full on the most beautiful young woman I had ever dreamed might exist. I had only an instant to note her loveliness, however, for she swayed dizzily and would have fallen to the stone flagging had I not sprung to her side and caught her in my arms. I carried her inside and laid her upon a broad divan. My mother, startled, rallied at once and bent over the unconscious girl. I summoned a maid, called the doctor.

When at last the girl regained consciousness, her mind was a blank regarding all that had happened before. Her disposition proved gentle and sweet, and so attached to her did my mother become that she kept the girl in our home, finally choosing a name for her—Alicia. I was crazy about her from the very first, wildly in love with her.

When mother died a year later, leaving the girl and me alone together, I begged my lovely Alicia to marry me, and she finally consented. We were married very quietly. Although I grieved deeply over the loss of my dear mother, I was also wonderfully happy with the lady of my heart.

We had been married only a few months when one day a friend gave me an unwanted, half-grown black kitten which, on the spur of the moment, I took home to my wife. I wish now I had drowned the cursed thing first!

As I dropped the fluffy creature in Alicia's lap, she recoiled. But when I would have taken the kitten from her she repulsed me. For the first time I saw anger in her eyes, heard sharpness in her gentle voice.

I date from that time her gradual

change. She appeared fascinated, dominated, by that small kitten. She even insisted it should sleep at the foot of her bed.

Then, one night, I woke to find her gone from her bed! Strangely enough I felt the most peculiar sense of disaster, of premonition, even of creeping horror, as I saw that empty bed! I rose hastily from my own bed, and threw on a bath-robe to go and look for her, thinking she might be ill and had gone to get herself medicine from the cabinet, or a hot drink. I noticed the kitten was gone, too.

I looked all over that house for Alicia and I could not find her! The kitten appeared from somewhere or other and followed me about awhile, and then left me to go back up-stairs, but I discovered neither sight nor sound of my wife. Thoroughly alarmed, I hurried back to our room to dress that I might search outside, although I had found every door locked.

There, in her bed, lay Alicia, apparently asleep, with the black kitten curled up at her feet. I was so astounded I stood stock-still for a moment. Then suddenly rage possessed me. I strode across that room to her bedside, and, seizing her slender, white shoulders, shook her sharply. When I released my hold on her, she fell back limply. Her eyes had not opened, never flickered! Frightened, I felt for her heart, felt the slow, faint beats that told me she was not dead. I tried to restore her and was about to send for a doctor when she roused. In a few moments she was herself, and wide-awake.

I chided her for frightening me by leaving her bed and hiding from me, when to my astonishment she declared she had not even waked up all night, until just now when I had waked her. She had slept an uncommonly deep, dreamless sleep, she said. When I told her she had disappeared for all of an hour, she was even more astonished than I, and perhaps more fearful, though she

tried to conceal her trepidation.

This same thing happened several times during the next few months. I never saw her actually disappear and do not know how long these occurrences lasted. I never found out where she went, nor when she came back. I would search that house over, watch every possible place for her, all to no avail. The kitten apparently missed its mistress as well, for it, too, would wander about for awhile, only to give up before I did and return to its usual place on Alicia's bed.

The weather grew warm and one evening I decided to look about outside, despite the fact that I could not understand how she could be out of the house when every door and lower window was locked. Lighting a cigarette to help steady my nerves, I opened the French doors of the library and strolled along the wide portico to the end of the house where I could look up and down the silent street.

The lonesome kitten had followed me and purred loudly as it rubbed up against me. I leaned over and petted it absently. Soon it saw a firefly, the first of the season, and ran out to chase it. A car turned the distant corner and raced down the deserted street. The kitten, perhaps startled by the sudden roar of the open motor, or blinded by the glare of the headlights, ran out in the road, directly in front of the car. I saw the wheels pass over the soft little body. Probably the driver never even knew he had run over anything.

Dropping my cigarette, I was about to run out and pick the little creature up, if there were anything left of it to pick up. Alicia would miss her feline companion, even though it had seemed to exert an uncanny influence upon her. However, as I took my first step forwards, there was the sound of a soft sigh, a gently expiring breath, in my ear. Startled, I glanced back but saw nothing. I turned about again, and hurried out to that mangled pet of Alicia's. (Continued on page 95)

# The Curse of the One-Eyed Buddha

(Continued from page 48)

quiescence. "By Gosh, I think you're right," he burst out. "So that's it, eh? That ruby was originally—ah—stolen from a Hindu temple, wasn't it? And the fellow you bought it from was a Hindu?"

I nodded. "Rabindranath Kim was his name," I said. "Do you think the authorities there—"

"Sounds like a fairy story, but maybe—maybe——" He ruminated on that for a few moments. "The priests of that temple might be the outside parties mixed up in this. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised. I think you made a mistake in buying that ruby, if you ask me."

"I KNOW darned well I did," I returned. "There's no excuse for it—except that sometimes a collector in the grip of his hobby is apt to do things that he wouldn't dream of doing, otherwise. If there is any excuse for it, that's it. But I'm off the hobby for good, and you can write that into your book. I've bought my last jewel. If it hadn't been for that ruby, Sam would still be with me, and all that happened to-night might not have——"

"If! If!" jeered the detective. "If your aunt had wheels, she'd be a wagon! What's the good of going into all that, now? The thing is, what next?"

I peered over the edge of the roof to learn whether our shooting had alarmed the neighborhood, but all was quiet, and it did not appear as though anyone had paid the slightest attention to what had gone on during the last few minutes.

"No one seems to have noticed," I said to Moran. "Funny—the sound of those shots——"

"Not many people notice the sound of shots in a city of this size nowadays. Most persons, if they hear them at all, think they're the backfiring of an automobile, I guess."

"The thing to do next, I should think——" I reverted to the original topic—"is to go back to that attic storeroom. That was our original plan, wasn't it?"

Moran nodded. "Let's go, then," he said. "The longer we stay around here, the less I seem to know about what's going on. I don't see just what we'll gain by going back to that room, but since we've both got a hunch that there's something to be gained by it, we'd better get it out of our system."

But it was not to be so easy, for as we approached the skylight in order to descend, we saw that the ladder was no longer there. It was of iron, but it was light and movable, and it had been an easy matter to lift it off its fastenings—it fastened over the edge with two hooks—and drop it down in the hall below. We stood, nonplussed, for a moment.

"Now, who in the name of the Continental Congress could have done that?" inquired Moran, in an aggrieved fashion, of the world in general.

I shook my head. "You can search me," I said. "The question is, how to get down."

"No, that isn't the question at this moment," Moran corrected me. "You poor young simp—pardon me for getting personal, but you are one, you know—it's more important to try to find out who took the ladder down, isn't it? Somebody might be

waiting right below in the dark to bump us off."

I nodded. "You're right. Now, as to who it was, we know who is in the house——"

"Well, I know who it wasn't," broke in Moran. "It couldn't be the bird in a kimono who walked off the edge of the roof—that's one I'm sure of. That leaves Sinton, and anybody else who might happen to be around, and to whom our presence would be inconvenient."

"Well, let's take a look, anyway," I said.

We both had flashlights, and we leaned over the skylight and sent their beams into the hall below.

"There's the ladder," said Moran. The light we projected below revealed the ladder lying in the hall where it had been placed by whoever had removed it from its moorings.

WE ranged the hall as far as the bend of the stairs with our lights, but could discover nothing.

"The coast looks pretty clear," I said. "I don't see any trace of anyone or anything."

"Neither do I," said Moran. "I guess the thing to do is for one of us to drop down and replace the ladder. It isn't much of a drop, from here."

It was a drop of perhaps twelve to fifteen feet, which was nothing to worry about, if you hung by your hands from the edge of the skylight, and let go. I put the flashlight back into my pocket, and prepared to descend.

"I guess I'll try it," I said.

He nodded, and I climbed down the side of the skylight, hung by my hands for a moment, and dropped down on my toes without even jarring my system. As I did this, Moran focused his light so that I could see what I was dropping into.

"O.K.," I whispered up to him, and his grotesque head, which was silhouetted against the somber sky, nodded down. He kept the light going while I lifted up the ladder, placed it carefully against the edge, and he fastened it. Then he started to climb down, putting back the skylight cover as he did so.

When we stood together again in the black, silent hall, it was Moran who spoke first, as usual.

"I'd give something to know who pulled that one on us," he said in a low tone.

"I wonder whether he has any connection with the——" I fumbled in my mind for a designation.

"With the eagle who flew off the roof?" supplied Moran. "I wonder that, too—or whether they are two separate parties working independent of each other."

"There must be places in this house we haven't seen," he continued, after a pause—"places where these people can hide. I thought we had gone all through the house, but it seems we overlooked a great deal. Can you suggest any place——" He looked at me inquiringly.

I shook my head. "I don't know, really," I offered. "We've gone through all of it that I've ever seen. But I really think we're going to get something of value out of our examination of that storeroom."

"Well, we've been talking of it long enough," said Moran. "Let's do it, and get it over with."

We made our way quietly down the hall and into the room, and closed the door. With both our flashlights going, there was very little there that could escape us. We looked again at the pile of trunks—empty, for the most part. We had examined them carefully the first time we had come up here. I noted particularly the curious step-like arrangement of trunks leading up to the top of the room. Perhaps they had been placed that way for a definite purpose.

I pointed this out to Moran, whispering my reasoning to him, and he nodded.

"But what would one want to go up there for?" he questioned, and offhand it seemed a very fair query.

"That, I don't know," I said, "but it appears that there is a reason for it—and that's what we have to find out. I was just on the verge of investigating a little while ago," I said. "Now, I'm going to climb up and see what I can see, and don't let's be interrupted this time. Just keep your flashlight going—and, if I were you, I'd keep my hand on the butt of the gun, too. We might not be allowed to finish our work in peace this time, any more than we have been before."

HE grunted his response to this, and took his gun out, keeping his flashlight trained on the wall and the trunks, which I was already ascending. At the top, next to the moulding, I felt around for what I could discover, and in a few moments I came upon what I wanted.

"Ah, this is it," I said. "At least, I think so." It was a small, soft depression, which seemed to have some sort of a spring beneath it in the plaster.

"What is it?" whispered Moran.

"Don't know," I whispered back. "I'm going to try it." I suited the action to the word by pressing my finger firmly down upon it. What happened surprised me so much that I nearly fell off my precarious perch, where my footing was none too firm, anyway. I heard a grunt of amazement from Moran, too.

The moment I pressed the spring, for that is what it really was, the whole wall—which took up that whole side of the room—slid downwards as though in a groove, noiselessly and swiftly, with real weight and power.

It slid down for about a foot and a half—leaving an opening directly into the next room—stayed at its new low level for a second or two, and suddenly snapped back again, quietly, but with immense force. As I stared at it, my flashlight leveled against its top, I found myself again facing a blank wall that fitted so cleverly into the rest of the room that I could not see where it was joined.

I did not at the moment understand what this contrivance had to do with the weird happenings in this house, but I could see that it must be connected with them in some way or other. I stared at it, trying to reach some kind of solution.

"Well, I'll be something or other," floated up to me the amazed whisper of Moran.

"Did you see that, too, or was I seeing banshees again?" I whispered down to him.

"Yes. I saw it," he said. "What does it mean?"

I shook my head. "That's what we must find out. It evidently means a great deal."

"Just how did that happen?" he asked. "Why, there's a spring up here, and you push it, and the whole wall runs down in the groove for a minute, and then snaps back again."

"I'll say it snaps back again," said Moran. "I should hate to be caught in that—it would crush you in two. Press it again, and let's see just what happens."

I put my finger firmly on the spring, and the wall slid down again, paused, and then ponderously and without noise snapped back into its original place. The device was so cleverly constructed that it could be discovered only by accident.

MORAN and I were silent, for there seemed to be nothing to say. What was the purpose of the sliding wall, and who had installed it? I thought of my dead great-uncle, and remembered that he had been under some sort of a cloud when he had committed suicide—in this very room. It was reasonable to suppose that his extra-legal operations—whatever they were—had been conducted here. Perhaps he had built the ingenious device in order to be able to make a ready escape when it was necessary. His suicide had never been satisfactorily explained—to me, at least. Perhaps his secret had been discovered, or was on the verge of discovery, and death had been the only way out. There are few families, I reflected, that haven't some sort of a skeleton in their closet.

"Well, come on down," said Moran, "and let's begin to go through the house. A great deal is clearer to me now—that is, I understand how a man can come in here pile up something against the door, and escape into the next room, for instance."

I nodded, making my way down the pile of trunks. Together we quietly went down to the basement and began to work our way upwards through the house. We examined the cellar thoroughly, but could find nothing there. Next, in the darkness, and as quietly as two cats, we came up to the

main hall. We trembled with excitement.

As we rounded the bend, we must have made a little noise, though I myself did not hear it, for a shadowy figure flew past us, up the stairs, alarmed by our advent.

We were in full pursuit in an instant. The figure was nearly a floor ahead of us, but we managed to keep it dimly in sight. Moran was breathing hoarsely with the exertion, but he had breath enough left to shout at the fleeing figure.

"Stop, or I'll shoot!" he commanded, but the figure in front of us kept on without answer, simply going faster.

Whoever he was, he headed for the top floor—and now I knew where he was going. Everyone in this house who hid, or fled, went to the room with the sliding wall. I redoubled my pace and Moran was only a few feet back of me. There came the sound of a door being banged, and I knew that our quarry had gained the room.

We paused only an instant on the outside of the door, and then, my flashlight lighted, we plunged in after him. On the instant a scream of mortal agony rent the still night air, the scream of one who is caught in a death-trap and knows there is no hope. My flashlight swooped upwards to the top of the sliding wall, and a terrible sight met my eyes.

In the aperture between wall and ceiling was caught the body of a man—caught and wedged hard and firm in the return snap of the sliding wall. What had happened, obviously, was that he had tried to fling himself through the aperture just as it was closing, and had been crushed by the heavy weight of the wall as it had snapped back into place. He was groaning feebly, and I felt a sick feeling at the pit of my stomach, for I knew that he was as good as dead. Everything inside of him must have been fractured and smashed.

"My God, get me out of here!" came the hoarse, pleading voice of the poor wretch.

I WAS up the trunks leading to the top of the room at one bound, trying to tug him loose. But it was without avail. He groaned and fainted under my hands. Quickly I pushed the spring once more. The wall slid down. I snatched the body out from the aperture and took it, a dead weight in my arms, to the floor, where I

laid it down. The wall snapped back into place.

Moran and I bent over it, and as our flashlights played on the man's face, I recognized him.

It was Rabindranath Kim, the Babu whose acquaintance I had made in India, and who had sold me the great ruby that had been the eye of Buddha. I gave a gasp of astonishment.

"It's Rabindranath Kim!" I ejaculated. "I thought so," said the detective grimly. "I guess he's gone, all right."

But Rabindranath Kim belied the words as we bent over him, for he opened his eyes and even smiled faintly.

"You are right, sahib," he said. "I will die in a few minutes."

His voice was faint, but clear and distinct, and there even seemed to be a look of relief in his eyes as he pronounced his own death sentence.

"It will perhaps be better so, gentlemen," he said. "I could not now go back—to India, after this."

Moran looked at him steadily. "Can you talk?" he asked. "I mean, enough to make some sort of—"

"Connected story? I think so. You don't happen to have some—ah—whiskey?"—

Moran pulled a flask from his pocket immediately. "I always have this in case of an emergency," he explained. He applied it to the lips of the dying man, who drank steadily, and it seemed to revive him so that he was almost animated.

"Are you the one who killed a man here tonight?" asked Moran. "Be truthful; you have nothing to gain by lying."

Rabindranath Kim smiled a little. "I will be truthful," he said. "The truth is that I don't think I killed him."

"You don't *think* so!" ejaculated Moran. "Then, if you didn't, who did?"

"Ah, that would be difficult to tell. I don't think it was I, and I know it wasn't your butler—what's his name?—oh, yes, Sinton."

"Sinton!" I exclaimed. "What did he have to do with it?"

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know," said the Babu, "but as I've brought his name into it, perhaps I had better tell you that Sinton and I entered into a plot to steal your great jewel collection, including, of course, the

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ruby—which, by the way, I warned you particularly not to let anyone touch.”

“Where is Sinton now?” asked Moran.

“He is gone. I don’t think you’ll see him again. I saw him shoot past your man when his back was turned—he had been hiding in the areaway. But let me tell you what I know of this, because I feel that I won’t last long.”

“Sinton and I arranged to steal your jewels, and tonight was the night fixed upon. We did not know, however, that you intended to exhibit the ruby to your friends. When we opened the safe—Sinton has known the combination for years, you know—we got the jewels that were there, but the ruby was gone. Sinton was for letting it go, but I don’t mind telling you that I insisted on making a try for it.”

HE gasped a little, and for a moment we were afraid that he would not be able to go on. “I feel all—ah—vacant and numb in my middle.” He smiled sadly. “I think I can continue, however. First, we hid the jewels. To save you trouble, I’ll tell you that they are in the top of that sliding wall. There is a panel that goes inside of it—you’ll find it by feeling around—and you can—”

“You can’t feel around in there,” I said. “It snaps right back again.”

“If you press the spring twice, instead of once,” said the Hindu, “it will stay down until you press the spring for it to go up. My mistake was in trying to go through it after pressing it only once, but I was in a hurry. There is a similar spring in the room beyond.”

“Anyway I insisted on getting the ruby before I went, and I quarreled with Sinton, who said it was impossible. I left him—he had some work to do, in connection with your dinner—and armed myself with a kitchen-knife with a very sharp point. My plan was simple. Perhaps you do not know it—in fact, I am sure you do not know it—but at the corner of one of the decorations in the wood of your dining-room door there is a tiny hole which blends in with the carvings that surround it. With my eye applied to this hole, I was able to see when the ruby came around to your secretary. In a cabinet near the door is a switch that controls the electric lights on the ground floor.”

“What I intended to do was to turn off the lights the instant your secretary, who sat with his back to the door, got the ruby into his hands. Then I would open the door a fraction, throw the knife into his back, and in the darkness and confusion—it would all have taken only a moment, remember—step in, seize the ruby, go out again through the door which I had left open and which was only a step behind me, and make my escape.”

“It wasn’t a carving-knife you used,” said Moran. “It was a gold dagger—”

Rabindranath Kim shook his head. “I used nothing. I opened the door, after switching off the lights as I had planned, but I never threw the knife. A weakness came over me, and a blindness, so that I could neither see nor feel, and then the instant passed, and I knew it was too late. Something had been there before me. I heard the scream—you yourself heard that scream in the temple, Sahib!” he said to me. “And I knew that a power greater than I had been there. I recovered my strength immediately, and fled to this room.”

“What do you mean, that someone greater than you—” began Moran, but I kept silence, for I knew.

“That ruby,” said the Babu, “is under the protection of the One-Eyed Buddha himself—as I knew, and as the Sahib here knew. When I heard the scream—which we hear occasionally in the temple, and which has never had a *material* explanation—I knew that there were those here who had come for the special purpose of getting back the stone.”

“And you didn’t throw the dagger yourself—” asked Moran insistently.

“No. That dagger was thrown by no earthly hand. You must have seen the knife I had intended to throw,” he said to me. “I killed a cobra with it in this room. That snake was of a variety never seen except in the enclosure of the temple of Buddha at Bhangapore.”

“Where have you hidden in this house?”

“That was simple. Sinton knew about the sliding wall here, and we decided that this was really the best place one could hide, because you could go instantly from one room to the other. When you searched the next room, I was here—when you came here, I instantly returned to the next room. It was a simple plan—really, a good, workable plan—but we did not take into consideration the other forces that would not rest until they got the ruby back. I guess they must have it, by now.”

I nodded. “I think so. At any rate, it is not here.”

“THEY have it. They never fail,” said Kim, his voice perceptibly weaker.

“Before I go, let me assure you again that Sinton knew nothing of my intention of killing your secretary. He would not have permitted it, had he known. Are there any other questions you would like to ask?”

“Who killed my secretary?” I asked. “And how was it done?”

He shook his head weakly. “There are ways in the East that you gentlemen of the West know nothing of—ways that we ourselves, in the East, cannot explain. It is not safe to meddle in things that do not concern you, nor is it safe to cross the Will. Others before us have found that out. I advise you to let the matter drop. It will get you nowhere.”

“How did the body get up here?”

He shook his head again. “I don’t know. Has your ruby disappeared?”

“It certainly has,” said Moran.

“I knew it would. And the dagger?” questioned Rabindranath Kim.

“Yes.”

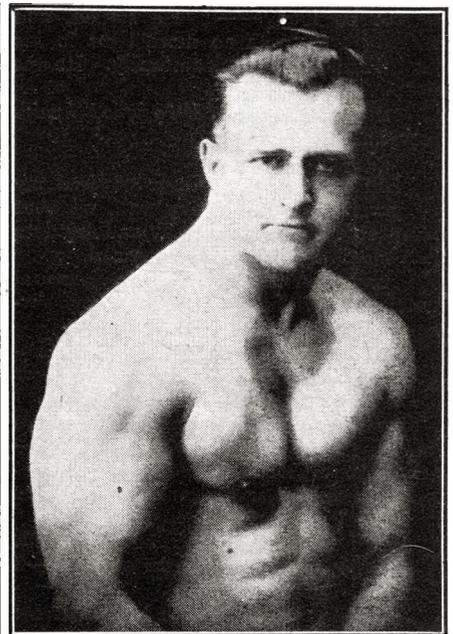
He nodded. “You will never know how it was done, for no one knows that. It is better so. These are not affairs of the flesh—not that either of you would believe it. But we—out there—know. We have been used to it for many thousands of years. But, to get back to the story—it’s getting dark, and I must hurry—you nearly caught both Sinton and myself here in this room. It was our footsteps you heard. Only your ignorance of the sliding wall permitted us to escape.”

“Did you see—ah—anyone with a cloak, such as the priests wear—” I began.

“Yes. I saw him. I knew it was all over, then. He was here, once—you met him?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Say prayers to your God. You are fortunate to be alive,” he said. “Others



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If at the end of 30 days you think you have improved, wait till you see yourself at the end of 90 days. Then the friends you thought were strong will seem like children by comparison. I'm not called the Muscle Builder for nothing. My system scientifically builds real muscle faster than you ever imagined.

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Notice how every woman prefers the fellow who carries himself with head up. Notice how the broad shouldered man always gets their eye. They want a dependable he-man when they make their choice—one who can protect them. And you can be that man. Remember, I not only promise it, I GUARANTEE IT. Now don't put it off a minute. Get going to new happiness and real manhood today.

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are not so lucky——” He smiled, and suddenly there was no more light in his eyes. His head fell back curiously. He was dead.

I turned to Moran. “He’s gone,” I said. Moran nodded.

**A** LITTLE later, having recovered my jewels from the sliding wall, we went to my study, Moran and I, and tried to piece together what we had learned.

“I told you there were supernatural agencies at work here,” I said. “Now, perhaps, you’ll begin to believe that——”

“Bunk!” said Moran. “You don’t believe that, do you?”

“Certainly I do believe——” I began.

“Bunk,” said Moran again. “This here dead baby is the one who threw the knife—and don’t you let no one tell you no different! I told you I would unravel this case.”

I stared at him in amused astonishment. “You! You unravel this case! Why——” I began.

“Yes, me, kid—me!” He looked at me significantly. “You see, you got to give this here coroner’s jury what they can believe—not some cock-and-bull story about banshees and ghosts. We got a confession from him, didn’t we? He was there with a knife, to do the killing. How do you know he didn’t make up the rest of it himself?” He stared at me in silence.

I was silent, too, for it occurred to me that perhaps it would be better not to rake up too much that would be unexplainable. And, as he said, how could one believe that Rabindranath Kim spoke the truth! And yet, I knew he did. There was too much in this case that could not have been done by any human hand—or, at least, by any human hand not assisted by some power we know nothing of.

And we let it go at that, for it was as good a way out of the matter as any.

Moran was right. The coroner’s jury found that my secretary had received his death stroke at the hands of a Hindu, one Rabindranath Kim, who was now dead. Sinton was named as an accessory, but was never captured. The earth might have swallowed him up, he disappeared so successfully.

I still feel that there is much that needs explaining, but I am frank to say that I

myself am unable to furnish an explanation further than has already been given. You must either believe that Rabindranath Kim was responsible for what occurred, or you may believe with me that these things could not have been done without supernatural assistance.

I may say, however, that the priest was undoubtedly the owner of the face I saw near the ceiling in the room with the sliding wall. He had discovered the wall, beyond question—and had used it as a ready means of escaping detection. When I dashed into the room after him, and in the gloom saw his face near the ceiling, he was, I suppose, on his way through the aperture into the next room. It may be said that one who possesses supernatural powers would not need to do this, but I take it that even such a person as this priest does not use his strange powers unless pushed to the last extremity.

I think, also, that he attempted to show himself to me in the next room in order that I might know that there was no use in my continuing the search for the ruby. For the same reason, I believe that he showed himself to Moran and myself, waiting until we came out of Sinton’s room, where he knew we were.

As to the figure that I seemed to see in the room with the sliding wall, the figure that pointed out to me the place where the spring was, it must be remembered that that room had been considered as haunted in my household ever since the death of my great-uncle. I have examined the records in the matter, and know now that my great-uncle, who committed suicide in that room, was the one who devised and built the wall. There were reasons—family reasons—as to why he should have a quick and absolutely unsuspected hiding-place. He was not a very law-abiding citizen, I find, and it was evidently due to his fear of imminent discovery that he decided to end it all.

**I** DO not know, nor do I presume to say, who or what the ghostly figure was on that occasion, but in view of the fact that the wall was my great-uncle’s special property, and that he was my kinsman, I believe there are those among you who will believe that his influence was at work in conjuring up the vision which I saw.

As for the great ruby which had been the

eye of Buddha, the police concluded that I had had no legal title to it, in any event, and that therefore they were not justified in pursuing the matter any further. I agreed with them, of course.

Since then I have given up my dangerous hobby, and have dispersed my collection. I am engaged in the business of handling my large estate myself, and I find it is really a man’s-size job. There is a girl now—but of that, I think, I will not speak further.

You may not believe in the spiritual, or the supernatural. I am not attempting to shake your belief, but I know that in the East things have happened, and still happen, which are beyond our comprehension.

**S**OME time later, having gone on a few months of travel, I stood again in the temple high on the hill that overlooked the city of Bhangapore. I was dressed as a native, and no attention was paid to me. The temple was high and domed, with small windows high up on the walls, and rush-mats scattered here and there for the respectful and reverent prostrations of the worshipers. At the far end, on a raised dais, was the squat image of Buddha.

As I approached, even from a distance I could see the deep, mysterious gleam of the tremendous ruby that was set in the center of its forehead. It gleamed on, calmly and agelessly—a great, round, unwinking, blood-red eye. I stood silent and respectful before the figure of the Buddha, contemplating the ruby. A gold dagger, symbolizing the swift vengeance of the god, reposed on a salver at the side of the image.

The priests filed in quietly, barefooted, and in their van was one whose dank, black hair and luminous eyes I knew.

A look passed between him and me as he went past. But there was nothing of recognition in his eyes. Whether he knew me, I have no means of knowing. His affair with me was at an end, and I think that he would have shown absolutely no recognition even if he had known.

Over us all, penitents, priests, and impostors, the One-Eyed Buddha brooded and dreamed, and in the depths of his ruby eye lay the submerged mystery of centuries. There was a benign peace and restfulness in the moment that I shall not forget.

After a moment or two, I passed out into the bright sunlight of the Indian day.

## The Picture That Came to Life

(Continued from page 16)

the chance. If so it would be my opportunity to capture him.

I reported back at ten o’clock, and explained that I desired to keep watch alone in the living room. Before I put out the lights, I again carefully scrutinized the picture. Its condition was unchanged. From the floor, one would have sworn that it had been cut from its background.

Nearly everybody has had the experience of waiting in the dark under conditions that bear the hint of danger. It is nerve-racking to the ordinary citizen, to whom it seldom happens. But soldiers and detectives take it as a matter of course. I have lain in ambush for so many criminals, in my time, that I have lost count. Never before or since the Du Puy Dome affair have I been emotion affected. On that extraordi-

nary night, however, I could not get rid of the idea that I was dealing with the weird, the unknown, and to my shame I found myself trembling.

It would have helped a lot if I could have smoked. That being out of the question, I sat in an armchair, clenched my teeth and let my eyes wander over the vague bulks of the pictures in their velvet-draped frames.

The house sank into absolute silence. When eleven o’clock struck on the antique clock in the hall, the musical clangor startled me as much as a gun-shot might have done. After that, I was scarcely aware of how the time was passing. It may have been midnight, though probably it was a little earlier, when I suddenly knew that someone was in the room with me.

I turned my head and stared into one black corner after another. At first, I saw nothing. Then I perceived a faint white mass, which promptly advanced towards me, as though it were glad it had caught my attention.

It moved with little, mincing steps, and as it came nearer a phosphorescent glow that emanated from it showed me that it was the figure of a woman. The whole body was transparent, but the very beautiful face and small, shapely hands were rich with a pink glow.

**I** MUTTERED to myself: “You are out of your mind, Rops. A regular phantom would be had enough. But the ghost of a picture is too much to accept. The color of those cheeks is that of paint. It appears to be

the wraith of Camille's portrait, which is a manifest absurdity."

Nevertheless, I did not stir from my seat. I allowed the exquisite wraith to come close, close to me. She smiled wistfully into my eyes, then stretched out her hand and touched the waistcoat pocket in which I was carrying the locket I had found in the morning. Amazed, I wondered what the connection might be. I took the trinket from my pocket and offered it to her, but she shook her head. The next moment, she had flitted away to the far depths of the room and disappeared.

I FELT intuitively that this was but the prelude to my adventure. It did not surprise me to hear almost immediately a stealthy scratching at the window. The latter swung inwards, and a man crawled into the room. This, of course, was the intruder of the night before. He did not carry a flashlight, which proved him to be an amateur. On his hands and knees, he hunted near the window in the dark for his locket. Then he sighed, got to his feet and walked straight in my direction.

"You will obey me in every detail, or I shall be forced to shoot you," I said quietly. "First of all, put your hands above your head."

He uttered a queer, strangled groan. His silhouette was sufficiently definite for me to know that he had raised his hands. "At least, *you* are not a ghost," he gasped.

"I am a detective, but I rather fancy I won't have to send you to jail," I replied, and was astonished that I had used precisely those words. "Sit down in this chair next to me. No conversation, please. Let us see what happens."

He followed my instructions silently. I observed that the room had become vibrant with strong waves of emotion, which had not existed when I had been alone there. The phantom was returning. I knew it with complete certitude, even before I saw her. Then, of a sudden, she was before us. She paid no attention to me, but threw out both hands in a gesture of supplication

towards the stranger. Her smile was the saddest, the most pleading smile I had ever seen. An eerie light poured from her and illumined his face.

"Oh, Oh! Don't look at me like that," he whimpered. "I promise you I won't harm the painting. And if I find the locket, I'll never sell it—not if I starve, so help me God!"

For a brief instant, the phantom continued to stare at him. Then, apparently satisfied, Camille floated up from the floor, drifted to the spot where the frame of her portrait hung and seemed to melt away into the wall.

I threw myself across the room and switched on the electric light. It took several minutes for me to swallow the almost incredible fact that confronted me. The picture had been fully restored. It was a splendid likeness of the human original of that ghost who had so lately been with us.

I turned to the stranger, and found him to be a young man with an attractive, though weak, face. His thick hair and dreamy eyes gave him an oddly old-fashioned appearance.

"Wouldn't you say, my friend, that we were either drunk or crazy?" I remarked grimly.

He shook his head. "It was the spirit of Camille," he answered. "You see, I came here last night to steal the portrait. I didn't know how to reach it, and I was standing in the dark looking up when—when it left the canvas and stepped down to me. I was frightened. I ran away."

"And in your haste, you lost a locket. Here it is." I took it from my pocket and handed it to him. "I hope it's your legitimate property."

"Yes. It's been in my family for three generations. It contains a lock of the hair of *La Dame aux Camelias*. But I wanted this portrait, too. I intended to take them both to America and sell them." He shuddered.

Again I felt that I was on the verge of some fantastic revelation. "There's a link

missing in this puzzle," I said. "Granting that the ghost of Camille materialized, why should she take so much interest in keeping you from a crime? Who are you, anyway?"

"I am the grandson of Armand Duval." "Nonsense!" I cried, with anger. "Every one knows that the original of Dumas' Camille was one Marguerite Gautier. But the character of her lover, Armand Duval, was purely fictional."

"THE public has always thought so," he replied listlessly. "The fact remains that Dumas drew Armand from the Comte de B——, and I am his poverty-stricken grandson."

He refused to add to his statement, and my later investigations proved that he had told me the truth. The story of Camille, admitted to be the most poignant love story of the Nineteenth Century, seemingly is more than a tale. I am forced to admit from my own experience, herein recorded, that that love reached even beyond the tomb and down to the third generation.

No wonder the greatest actresses have always liked to play the rôle upon the stage and screen.

Not wishing to alarm Madame du Puy Dome, I merely informed her that her picture had faded and that I had found a way to restore it.

But for a long time, I puzzled over the literal aspects of the phenomenon I witnessed. How and why had the phantom been able to drain the color from the canvas? Finally, I consulted a friend who dabbles in mysticism. He said there was nothing unbelievable about it. All matter, according to him, has an astral as well as a realistic phase. In order to make herself visible, the ghost of Camille might well have used the spiritual substance of the paints which had preserved her likeness for so many years.

It sounded all right, as he put it—but I don't know! If I can find the time as I grow older, I intend to add the study of the occult to my hobbies.

## The Ghost Tiger

(Continued from page 19)

"It is Hatha," replied Mounwah, soberly. "She is safe, O master, for the cobra's poison is like water to her and his anger is as nothing."

One of the young men threw fresh bark upon the fire, and the flames sprang into life. Shadows leaped longer across the clearing as the men rose and the notes of the drum beat louder. The girl came on with her arms flung out in a gesture of appeal, each of them wrapped from slender wrist to glistening shoulder in the drab gray-and-mottled coils of a hooded cobra. Another thick serpent was festooned about her throat, its head drawn back, its eyes blazing into hers. It was then that Phelps saw she was smiling.

HER pace quickened with the drum-beats, and as she moved her head, the great cobra at her throat moved in accord, his evil eyes never leaving hers, his fangs never more than the width of a hand from her sensuous red lips. She moved her hands to-

gether at arm's length in front of her, and the serpents thrust their flat, ugly heads out in advance. She whirled in a mad circle, raising her burdened arms high over her so that, with the heads of the serpents extending yet farther into the dancing light above, she gave the impression of unnatural height.

The men burst into a chant without words, a sound as weird as the night noise from the jungle. And all the while the tom-tom spoke, now booming into the thick jungle, now pulsing softly like a gentle surf on a sandy beach. As they chanted, the men began to sway and every pair of eyes turned upon the girl, yet not once did any but she look straight into the eyes of a cobra.

"Great God," exclaimed Phelps, clenching his hands behind him in the gloom. "Tell me, Mounwah, have those snakes been drawn? She doesn't handle them, does she, with their poison sacs?"

"O my master," replied the native humbly, "Hatha lures the cobra from his

warm rock in the swamp. She is unharmed and the serpent does her bidding. It is a gift from the spirits of her fathers."

Phelps watched the scene again and found his body quivering.

The notes of the tom-tom died. The girl spun on slim, brown feet and fell in a little heap to the ground. Her arms were crossed behind her head and the three cobras slowly unwound themselves, coiled within reach of her hands, and with raised hoods watched her. Then, as though by common consent, they lowered their thick bodies to the ground and moved out beyond the fire's glow to disappear in the black jungle beyond. The girl rose, looked once into the dark whence they had gone, and, turning, walked back to the womenfolk with never a glance at the men.

Phelps wheeled and, as he made for his tent, he staggered. He called to Mounwah, who followed him.

"Tell me," he said, when they had reached the tent, "does this girl handle all snakes in

this manner? Has she no fear?"

"Hatha rules the snake people," replied the native. "All serpents are one to her, O master—every one is her slave and the slave of her children's children."

Phelps poured himself a drink and his eyes grew crafty.

"Mounwah," he said, more in control of himself, "would you like to have a great horde of the white man's wealth—more than any hunter ever had before?"

Mounwah grinned, showing yellowed teeth. "I would have an elephant to do my labor, O master," he replied—"a gun to speak over great distance to my enemies. But such are beyond me, thy humble slave."

Phelps studied the native closely for a moment and continued. "That girl, Hatha—" he seemed to be speaking to himself, and his eyes were looking far off—"she would be worth a fortune in the United States."

He failed to catch the quick gleam in Mounwah's eyes, nor did he note the studied indifference that followed.

**T**HE white man would pay great sums in gold to see her charm the snake," Phelps went on. "With a few tigers to take back, some elephant ivory, and that girl a man would need to work no more."

Mounwah had no answer ready, or, if he thought of one, he kept silent. In a moment, when he saw that Phelps was no longer talkative, he rose silently from his haunches and melted into the semi-darkness outside. A lone youth stood sentry at the fire. The other natives had climbed to their thatched huts and hauled their light cane ladders after them. In the pens beneath the houses the goats and dogs moved fitfully as they heard the hunting song of the jungle creatures.

From far off, across rods of rank vegetation and tangled underbrush, came that most sinister of all the night noises that make up the symphony of the wild—the guttural, reverberating cough of a tiger. It was the voice of Sewar.

Mounwah, although his heart was heavy beneath his bronzed breast, fell into philosophic slumber untroubled by dreams. In common with his kind, like the animals that hunt and are hunted, he made his peace with the passing of the day and awaited the morrow with fortitude. But long before Phelps had roused from a deep stupor, Mounwah was squatted beside the village chieftain, to whom he had taken a gift of rice and a portion of ripe fruit.

"O father," he said, "I am in great pain and I know not what to do. I, Mounwah, the hunter, am come to thee as a child."

"So be it," replied the elder, lifting the bowl of rice to his lips.

"It has come to pass, O ancient and most wise one," Mounwah resumed, "that the

great white hunter has turned his eye upon Hatha. As you know—indeed, who of us does not?—it has been written that Hatha was mine. Come the time of the great rains once more, there would be dancing and music of the tom-tom, much feasting and great rejoicing. But now, O all-wise, it cannot be, for the white man has turned his eyes upon Hatha, the charmer of the cobra."

"Thou son of a gray monkey," chattered the old man, "dost thou not know that the white hunters do not mate with our women? Thou art seeing through the green eye and all things are colored."

"But hear me out, O my chief," persisted Mounwah doggedly. "The white man has made offer of great wealth—greater than any hunter ever possessed. He spoke of charming the cobra, and of returning to the white man's land with tigers and ivory. A man, he said, would need to work no more. I have seen, O great and wise one, women in the market-places on my memorable travels. It is a jackal's life and to it, O chief, Hatha does not belong. Furthermore, this white hunter, if I am a judge, has the evil eye."

The old chieftain looked long and earnestly at Mounwah, and the wisdom gained from dealing with white traders flashed into his ancient, beady eyes.

"He would hunt down Sewar, the ghost tiger," he remarked. "The curse of the spirit would then be upon us, if we aid. Go, Mounwah, and follow the jungle path with thy white huntsman. Keep thine ears open like the mouth of a hungry crow, but thy lips as close as the moss to the rock. We will watch—and we will see."

**B**ROAD daylight found the camp seething with the work that prepares for the hunt. Phelps was here, there, and everywhere, urging the men to hurry, scattering the naked children when he approached, kicking viciously at the lean dogs that slunk in his path. And always, when a woman appeared, his eyes went to her quickly, but not once did he glimpse her whom he sought.

"Mounwah," he said, when they were setting off into the jungle, "you understood me last night—about this snake charmer? I'll want you to speak to her in a while. Tonight, you may take to her some gifts. Tell her they are nothing to what she may have— No! On second thought, you'd better bring her to me."

Mounwah studied the trail and, on finding tiger spoor, failed to acknowledge the instructions, but Phelps took that for granted.

"I believe we're going to get that striped devil this time," he said, as they progressed through the bush.

"A tiger, O my master, may be within the trap, but not Sewar," replied Mounwah. "Only the python, which cannot see the ghost upon his back, would strike at Sewar." Then, beneath his breath, he

added: "And thou, thou pale dog."

A moment later they heard a great shouting among the advance hunters, and there came the heavy growl of a tiger that sprang futilely against the thick poles that formed the trap. Otherwise, the jungle creatures were silent.

About the trap the men were gathered. They could see the tawny body moving swiftly inside, and ever and anon the beast would fling himself against the tough bamboo poles, sunk deep into the ground and lashed together with strong bindings of rattan. For this was built to catch the tiger alive and was unlike the dead-fall traps the natives use. These are but log shelves set beneath a monstrous door in which there are studded the pointed ends of bamboo stakes which fall and pierce the victim.

Mounwah bounded ahead and peered between the stakes. He turned to his brothers, bearing an expression of mingled surprise and fear.

"It is Sewar, my brothers," he told them, "for I know him by the depth of his saddle where the ghost rides in flight before the night wind."

"What a beauty he is," shouted Phelps, his rifle beneath his elbow. "Now, Mounwah, we have a job. We must build a cage, a strong one that will hold this cat, for I am going to take him back alive."

They left a guard of eight men, six with spears and two with rifles—unwilling, to be sure, but drawn between their awe of the great white hunter and the ancient beliefs of their fathers. The others returned to the village to build a cage. Already the buffaloes, grazing near the village, had sniffed the scent of their ancient enemy and snorted as they pawed the ground, while boys ran around them to hold the herd from stampede.

Phelps gloated over the thought of the captured tiger. "A few more tigers, Mounwah, some ivory from the big tusks, and the snake charmer—listen!" He paused to gaze into Mounwah's eyes. "You'll not fail tonight? I would speak to the girl."

The native bowed, and his eyes went to the earth. He turned then to direct the building of the cage. Heavy logs, reinforced by rattan thongs, soon formed a rough box with an opening at one end for a sliding door. It was the work of an hour, for the men were quick and they worked nervously beneath the gaze of the white man.

**W**ORK swiftly, O my brothers," Mounwah told them, and added in a rush of their own dialect that Phelps could not understand: "And when the moon shows pale through the jungle trees, climb high! Leave rice and pig before the idol of Buddha, O true believers, and forget not the spirit tree that wards off ghosts, for this night shall we hear from Sewar and the

## CASH FOR OPINIONS

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Which story is best? Which is poorest? Why? Have you any suggestion for improving the magazine?

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gray horseman of the jungle threat."

They chanted a singsong reply and rolled their eyes as they shouldered the long cane stakes upon which hung the cage. Then, swinging into the jungle trail, with Phelps and Mounwah in their wake, they made for the trap where Sewar waited, carrying their burden easily despite their slimness, for the jungle men are strong.

At the edge of the village Phelps abruptly halted and stared up at the bamboo gallery of a hut. Hatha stood there, silhouetted against the flaming color of the jungle growth behind her. She looked down steadily, unsmiling, but her eyes were upon Mounwah and they seemed to see the white man not at all.

"Gad, she's beautiful," said Phelps. "If she were only white, now—"

His reflection, half to himself, was cut short by the shouting of the guards far back in the cane.

"Sewar! Sewar!" The cries came piercingly through the tangle, and the bearers of the cage took it up, wavering on the trail, reducing their tireless dog-trot to a walk.

"Now, what the devil are they yowling about?" demanded Phelps.

"I like not the sound, O my master," replied Mounwah. "They seem to say that Sewar has taken to the jungle. Perhaps—"

A native, wild of eye, who had thrown away his spear, darted from the trail, and his body glistened beneath the sweat. He had run carelessly through the underbrush and his flesh was torn by sharp thorns that thrust out everywhere like the evil tongues of cobras from a dank rock cave.

"Mounwah," cried the man, falling on his knees, "it is as the spirits told us. Sewar is free. The ghost that rides his back has sprung the trap, and Sewar roams the jungle. O my brother, we are doomed."

"What's that?" barked Phelps. "Is that damned tiger out of the trap?"

He gripped his rifle and raised his head to listen. And out of the distance towards the running water there came the unforgettable grumble of the tiger as he crashed through the underbrush, sounding above the yells of the running hunters. In another instant they burst from the growth, all speaking at once, crowding about Mounwah and Phelps, waving their arms and rolling their eyes to the sky.

Mounwah waved them back and spoke to the oldest among them—one of the gun-bearers. Directly, he turned to Phelps and interpreted the story.

"THEY say, O great master, that Sewar stood by the trap door and lowered his head as a horse may do that would raise the bars of his stall. I have seen the elephant and the buffalo thus move obstacles from their path. They say, too, that the ghost that rides Sewar leaned forward as a man in the saddle might do, to lift the gate. Sewar, in a bound, was free. Seeing all this, my brother took to the trees, and those with guns dared not fire. Sewar looked at them, one by one, O master, and turned into the jungle. They would go now to the sacred altars with gifts of rice and bananas, to plead before the spirits for protection from the ghost."

Phelps' heavy face was flushed and his eyes flamed.

"Back after that tiger," he roared, lifting his gun. "They've loosed him through their

damned cowardice. Back, I tell you. Drive them back, Mounwah!"

But Mounwah, even had he relished the work, would have been powerless. The natives had sensed the white man's mood and melted away like dew on the grass before the morning sun. No power could have drawn them back into the jungle in the face of its threat—not even the roar of the white hunter's gun. Mounwah tried to explain.

"We'll go, then," growled Phelps—"you and I. I'll kill the cat now. I won't let him get away this time."

But Phelps was no longer the hunter. Sewar's great, tawny head thrust itself from the rank growth, and behind it were the heavy shoulders, the mighty legs, as the tiger crouched.

"Sewar!" The voice of Mounwah sounded like a whisper.

Something swift and gray suddenly lifted itself from the rank cane over the tiger's back and disappeared into the jungle with a whirring sound—a thing that in the instant appeared and disappeared, without definite shape, noiseless but for the sound as it whipped the air. In the same instant Phelps' gun shattered the stillness and the red flame spat from the barrel. There was a second roar, and that was followed by the cough of Sewar as the long, striped body quivered and stretched out on the ground.

"Got him," yelled Phelps.

He ran forward, then paused to look back at Mounwah, who had fallen on his knees and was moving his body in a swaying motion as the natives had done at the fire when the snake charmer danced.

"Come on! Get up, you fool," shouted Phelps. "Your ghost tiger is dead."

Mounwah rose slowly, his eyes staring up into the gloom of the trees where all was quiet now, where the monkey clan and the birds were huddling in the shadows since the voice of Sewar and the thunder of the gun.

"O great master, thou has done a grievous thing," said Mounwah, slowly. "Did you not see the ghost rise from the back of Sewar even as you raised the gun? I saw it, O my white master, and this is truth."

Phelps laughed hollowly. "Yes, I saw it, you black idiot. It was a gray owl, though, and not a ghost."

But Mounwah was silent, though his lips moved. He stood at a distance, looking at the dead tiger.

"Well," barked Phelps, "get your niggers together and let's get this thing to the village. It's a good hide. But I'm going to get a couple of them alive, Mounwah."

When the village heard that Sewar was dead, there was much mumbling and great uncertainty, but the white man prevailed and in a while the long, yellow carcass of the tiger was brought in on bamboo poles over the shoulders of doubtful blacks. It was skinned, too, and Phelps then called upon them to set the trap again. To this the elders agreed.

"THE ghost that rode Sewar will find another tiger for a mount," they said. "It may even be that no harm will come to us, for the tiger ghost will know that we intend no harm and all this is against our will."

Mounwah alone, of all the others, remained idle that day. He was much in the *wat* beneath the gilded idol of Buddha and then, for some time, he was



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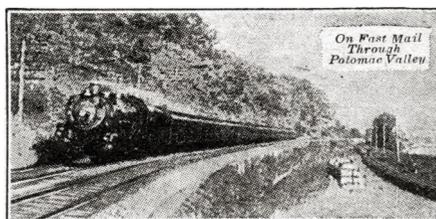
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seen at the edge of the village in speech with Hatha, the snake charmer, upon whom the great white man had gazed with awe.

Phelps, engaged with the trap builders, missed Mounwah and inquired about him. He was told that Mounwah was making his peace with the spirits of the jungle and placing gifts for the tiger ghost, to ward off harm. Phelps snorted and laughed. But when the evening meal was through and the blaze of the camp-fire reared itself colorfully from the black ground, he summoned Mounwah.

"Bring that girl here," he commanded. "I would speak with her."

Out beyond the fire the elders squatted as they had for many nights before, and as their ancestors had done before them. In the rear were the younger huntsmen, and off a little distance, the women and the naked children. But there was silence tonight and no sounding of the tom-tom. All eyes were turned on the white man's tent, before which he sat in the light of an oil lantern, appearing ghostly behind the veil of his mosquito net.

Presently, Hatha moved from the group of women. This night she carried no serpents and her head was downcast. Behind her Mounwah walked, and he also studied the ground. They entered beneath the netting together.

"O great white master," Mounwah began, "I have brought to thee Hatha, the charmer of the cobra."

"Ask her," said Phelps, looking with hard, greedy eyes at the smooth, tawny flesh of the girl's arms, "if she would be a queen among white men in my country."

Mounwah spoke to her, and when she had replied, softly, he turned to Phelps.

"She says, O master, that she is happy with her people."

"Doesn't she want gold and jewels and great wealth?" pursued Phelps.

After a moment, Mounwah spoke in reply. "Hatha says, O white chieftain of great power, that her wealth is in the ways of her people and not in the ways of the white gods."

"Tell her," continued Phelps, more than usually patient for him, "that in my country she could play with the snakes but twice each day. She could travel in great state and be the equal of the women there."

When Mounwah had translated this message, Hatha raised her eyes and looked directly into those of the white man as she spoke, her voice soft and husky, like water dancing over mossy rocks in a mountain stream.

"Hatha says, O master, that fruits of the same vine must grow and fade together."

Phelps grew impatient. "Can she understand me if I try your speech?" he asked.

Mounwah nodded. "She will understand, I believe."

PHELPS rose and towered over the girl, who shrank a little beneath his gaze. Mounwah, watching, moved his hand to the loin cloth where his knife lay in its scabbard of leather from the crocodile's throat, but suddenly he straightened and stood erect.

"Go back to the fire," commanded Phelps. "Hatha and I will talk."

Mounwah salaamed and, moving swiftly out from the netting, trotted to his brothers beside the fire. Phelps placed his hand on the girl's bare arm and she drew it away, but did not flinch otherwise. To an elder staring into the embers, Mounwah spoke in a low tone.

"O my wise and honorable brother," he said, "the tiger ghost flits through the jungle and the spirit of Sewar yet lives. The cobras that are slaves to Hatha lie with raised hoods on the cooling rocks beneath the moon. And I, Mounwah, thy lowly hunter, sit with my knife sheathed and listen to the threat of the jungle. Tell me, O master of most ancient wisdom, what course shall I pursue? What trail shall lead my feet to the gods of our people?"

Away off towards the river the night air was rent by the ominous cough of a tiger that spoke thrice and was still.

"That, my son, is thy answer," said the elder simply.

As Mounwah looked up, he saw Phelps part the netting at his tent and, with Hatha beside him, move out on the cleared ground. They walked slowly. Phelps was talking, and as he talked, he laughed, revealing his teeth. Their figures passed out of the glow of the red flower and melted slowly in the gloom beyond. Then they retraced their steps, and still the white man was talking, while Hatha kept her eyes on the ground.

Back and forth they paced a dozen times and each time they returned into the fire-light the eyes of all the natives followed them, then moved with them again as they went into the darkness of the ground be-

**THE Awards to Readers  
for Opinions of GHOST  
STORIES, issue of August,  
went to:**

1st award of \$10.00  
**MISS CHESTER A. CARTER,**  
Perryton, Texas

2nd award of \$5.00  
**MR. CHAS. BORNBACK, Jr.,**  
Bryon, Wyoming

3rd award of \$3.00  
**MR. AUBREY BROCK,**  
Winnipeg, Man.  
Canada

Someone will collect the awards  
for opinions on this issue. Why  
not YOU?

yond. Then came the time when they did not return, and those about the fire believed that they were standing at the edge of the clearing, the great white chieftain arguing with the girl to visit his people.

"O ancient wise one—" Mounwah spoke in his throat to the bent figure beside him—"I know it is truth that the white king beyond the sea protects his hunters who come to us. I know it is death to bring harm upon them, and it is the way of wisdom to receive them among us. But if harm comes to Hatha—then, indeed, shall I kill this white dog and place his pale body where it will lure the jackal and the kite."

"Peace," said the older man, "and bide thy time."

From the jungle came the voice of the tiger, nearer now, and other sounds dwindled. A hunter rose and piled dry wood high upon the fire so that the flames sprang up and crackled. Once more the tiger coughed, and from the pens beneath the huts came the sound of the tame buffalo

pawing the ground and the plaintive baaing of a goat awakened by his mortal enemy.

Suddenly, over the heads of the silent natives at the fire, a gray figure fled in an arrow's course into the darkness. At the same instant came the white man's scream. The blacks leaped to their feet, and one of the elders began a wordless chant.

Mounwah spoke in an undertone to the man at his side. "Was it, then, O tower of wisdom, the ghost that rode on Sewar? I have seen him this day, as thou knowst. Is it yet another, or was it the spirit of Sewar?"

"Peace," replied the graybeard. "Thou shalt see."

THE young hunter whose tom-tom had been silent, now struck its taut hide a single note and, after a pause, began his rhythmic beat. The chant rose higher on the night. A figure emerged from the blackness which led to the jungle, and sinuously progressed into the glow—and they saw that it was Hatha. Once more, hissing cobras were wrapped in coils about her arms, and a third one was wound around her throat.

"O beloved, my people," she sang, improvising her words, "Sewar is avenged and the ghost tiger rides again."

Over and over she repeated the words until at length she whirled and fell. And again, as last night, the cobras coiled, then straightened, and made for the jungle.

Mounwah sprang to Hatha's side and raised her from the ground.

"Where, my loved one, didst thou leave the white hunter?" he asked, in lowered voice.

"He is in the jungle, my master-to-be, with the ghost tiger and the spirit of Sewar."

"We must not let him die," said Mounwah, quickly. "The white king would send down trouble upon us."

Shouting to his brothers, Mounwah quickly sent them for torches which they dipped in the fire. In a few minutes they left the village in a long procession, single file, their bodies gleaming beneath the flickering lights. This way and that, they swayed, crying to the night. Then, a few yards away, an answer came—the harsh, rude growl of a tiger—and for a single moment they saw the shadowy form of the killer. The ghost tiger crouched on the edge of the jungle—its body faintly luminous in the brilliant moonlight.

A terrified silence then, as Mounwah, waving his torch, leaped forward on the trail and swiftly bent over the figure of Phelps, stretched at full length in a bed of thick grass. His face was distorted as though he was in pain, but his flesh was cold and his muscles were stiff. There were no wounds upon him, and his eyes were staring wide into the blackness of the jungle overhead.

"The tiger ghost is revenged," said Mounwah, quietly, kicking aside a thorn-apple which had fallen from a tree beside them. "Come, my brothers, we will carry the great white chieftain to the village. A runner must be off with the sun to tell his people."

An official dispatch from the American consul, a man long familiar with the jungle, explained Phelps' death to those who waited across the sea. Apparently, wrote the governor, Phelps, being unfamiliar with the jungle, and having gone for a walk a little way from his camp, had bitten into a *dhatara*, or thorn-apple, the surest poison in the jungle.

# The GHOST FORUM

## Pro and Con of Spooks in Literature

THERE has reached us from the publishers (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York) an interesting new volume, entitled *The Ghost Book*. It is an anthology of modern tales of the supernatural. The title page states that it was "designed by Cynthia Asquith," which somewhat cryptic statement means, we assume, that the lady edited the collection.

The authors represented include May Sinclair, Algernon Blackwood, Walter de la Mare, Arthur Machen, Clemence Dane, D. H. Lawrence, Mary Webb and Hugh Walpole. All are English, and in return for leaving local writers out in the cold we hope that Scribners intend to give us an All-American *Ghost Book*.

These English stories are charmingly written. Many of them are exquisitely shivery. They display an erudite knowledge of the subject. But, taken as a group, they are weak on the thrills which this reviewer expects in fiction that deals with the borderland between the known and the unknown. It isn't that the British imagination is incapable of creating authentic thrills: witness Bulwer's *The House and the Brain*, one of the greatest of all stories of mental terror. But the 1927 vintage appears to be a bit diluted.

The tales I enjoyed most were *The Rocking-Horse Winner*, by D. H. Lawrence, and *A Recluse*, by Walter de la Mare. The former is a bizarre conception. The hero being a little boy, Lawrence is at his best. He always writes well about little boys. This particular youngster has found that if he fixes his mind upon flesh-and-blood horses, when riding the rocking-horse in the nursery, he can foretell the winners at racing meets. A grim and pathetic climax—which it would be a shame to give away in a review—develops from this situation.

Walter de la Mare is a poet whose prose style is wistful and lovely. His story, *A Recluse*, is worth half an hour of anyone's time, even though the plot is not a startling one. De la Mare creates atmosphere with words that are few and well chosen, as in this paragraph:

Not a light showed in the dusk; no movement; no sound except out of the far distance presently the faint dream-like *churring* of a night-jar. It is the bird of wooded solitude. Well, there would be something of a moon that night, I knew. She would charm out the owls, and should at least ensure me a lullaby. But why this distaste, this sense of inward disquietude?

And as a first-rate, meaty example of his style, I offer the following:

It is difficult to suggest; but it was as if a certain *aspect* of the room, its walls, angles, furniture, had been peculiarly intensified. Whatever was naturally grotesque in it was now more grotesque—and less real. Matter seldom advertises the precariousness imputed to it by the physicist. But now, every object around me seemed to be proclaiming its own transitoriness. With a conviction that thrilled me like an unexpected contact with ice, I suddenly realized that this is how Mr. Champney's room would appear to anyone who had become for some reason or another intensely afraid. It may sound wildly preposterous, but I stick to it. I myself was *not* afraid—there was as yet nothing to be afraid of; and yet everything I saw seemed to be dependent on that most untrustworthy but vivid condition of consciousness. Once let my mind, so to speak, accept the evidence of my senses, then I should be as helpless as the victim of a drug or of the wildest night-mare. I sat there, stiff and cold, eyeing the door.

W. A. R.

## The Letter that Won First Prize

### JUDGES OF AWARD:

I think the August issue of GHOST STORIES is about the best one I have seen. The stories are all so good it is difficult to pick the best or poorest.

*The Story of the Late Mr. Elvsham* is the one which most appealed to me. In the Table of Contents, the statement is made that this story should not be read after ten P. M. Now, that statement is indeed substantiated.

It was after midnight, all the other folks were in bed, the house was deathly still, rain was pounding on the roof—in fact, the scene was ideal for such a story of horror. I began to read and the farther I read, the more frightened I became. The effect the story was intended to produce was horror, and I certainly felt the effect. My hair began to bristle on my neck, my mouth became dry and I could hardly swallow. I was in a state of hypnotic tension which relaxed so suddenly with the startling climax that I almost fainted. I was so deeply immersed in the action of the story that it took me several minutes to fully come to myself after I finished the story. I felt its effect for the rest of the night, for

I dreamed horrible dreams and in the morning I felt as if I had been through a horrible adventure of some kind. This is a true description of the effect the story had on me.

I get a thrill from just looking at the cover of GHOST STORIES, so one can hardly imagine the effect such a story of terror and the supernatural could have on a sensitive, nervous person like myself. But I liked the thrill; I crave thrills like this. I like the story for its "organization" culminating in the terrifying climax, the descriptions which were in keeping with the dominant tone of horror and the calculated effect of weirdness. The chief reason for my liking of the story was the thrill it gave me.

I thought the poorest story was *Port of Dreams*. This story was supernatural but it did not sound as plausible as the other stories. It was not horrible enough to be in keeping with the true nature of GHOST STORIES. It had a romantic quality which should have placed it in *Love Stories* or some such other sentimental magazine. It was not even weird. It did not thrill me at all. It did not send chills up and down my spine as did the story men-

tioned above. So in a nutshell, the story was not startlingly weird, the effect was soothing instead of horrifying, and there was not a thrill in it except the kiss between the hero and the heroine.

I think GHOST STORIES is one of the best, or is the best, of its nature on the market. The stories are thrilling and scary. They are intended to be weird and horrifyingly thrilling and indeed their effect leaves nothing to be desired. The only criticism I have to offer is to prevent sentimental and romantic love stories such as *Port of Dreams* from being printed in GHOST STORIES. It destroys the effect of the entire magazine. That story and others like it are not horrible enough for the magazine. Let all the stories be so effective that they send the readers to bed after midnight in shuddering, blood-congealing terror of the shadows. That is the effect they have on me, and I like it! I never miss a number and I wish GHOST STORIES much success.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Chester A. Carter, Box 438, Perryton, Texas.

# The Mind Reader

(Continued from page 43)

downwards at the manager's unconscious body.

"Of course."

"You're wrong. The bullet I fired at him was made of wax. He's only stunned."

With mounting astonishment, I inspected the body. There was a red bruise in the middle of the forehead, but evidently the skull had not been pierced. The lips were parted naturally. I caught a flicker of the eyelids.

"Why, he's coming to!" I exclaimed blankly.

"Is he?" remarked Owen. "Gad! It would be amusing to question him and find out who he thinks we are. But we can't spare the time. Put him in the linen closet with the negroes. It doesn't matter what nightmares they have, so long as they are physically separated from us."

Nolan and I did as we had been ordered.

"A wax bullet!" I repeated, rubbing my eyes.

"Yes. I made it and doctored the first cartridge in the clip," my brother answered. "I felt sure I'd have to stop some innocent fool, merely to break into the building. But my remaining bullets are made of lead."

Owen's concentration upon the papers he had taken from the desk occupied him wholly for the next few minutes. He was unhurried, yet keen and sure. Now and then, he drummed on the board with his fingertips. His face was the non-committal mask to which I had grown accustomed throughout the windings of this grim affair. Suddenly, he threw himself back in the manager's swivel chair and spoke sharply.

"We know for certain that Buwalda has Coralie with him at this moment."

"How do we know it?" I asked foolishly.

"Because he needs her presence to perform his mind control, and the delusions of the men in the linen closet prove that he is functioning."

"Of course," I muttered, recalling what the spirits had said on this subject the night before.

"Good. I believe him to be here in this building, though that is not sure. The house records show me that he occupies the top floor, the fifteenth."

"Under his own name?"

"Yes. He never dreamed that the name would become notorious, or that we could track him down. He'll get another surprise when we visit his top floor."

I shivered. "What chance have we against him?"

"You'll see. He's a coward at heart. He'd probably be glad to take to his heels right now."

"But, look here!" I dissented. "He can practice throughth. He can project his body through solid walls any time he pleases. Remember the truck on Court Street. What's to prevent his escaping?"

"Simpleton!" cried Owen. "He could get away—yes. But he'd have to leave Coralie behind him, and by that very act he'd lose his power. He will take other means. He will summon help—"

The speech was cut short by a thundrous explosion that seemed to have occurred only a few blocks away and that shook the

big apartment building in which we were.

"There's Buwalda's first stroke!" declared Owen coolly. "His campaign of terror is on again. I expected it."

We heard outdoors a mutter of voices which swelled into a roar. A squad of policemen came running along the sidewalk, stopped in front of Number Two Thousand and Eleven, and began to hammer with their nightsticks on the bronze of the storm door.

"It will hold for a considerable time. Come. We must work fast." With these words, my brother darted over to the elevators and put one of them out of commission by discharging his revolver point blank at the base of the control lever. He then stepped into the other elevator, and signed to us to follow him.

"You're the motor pilot, Nolan," he said. "Run us up to the fifteenth floor."

Grinning his admiration, the chauffeur obeyed. He whistled a few bars of the "Armentières" ditty as he sent us flying upwards. But I could not bring myself to take the situation lightly.

"We are to shoot our way into Buwalda's apartment—is that it?" I asked.

OWEN shrugged. "I found a master key in the desk. It would admit us if he hasn't changed the locks. The shooting would come afterwards. But I have a better plan than that."

"What is it?"

He drew a sheet of paper from his breast pocket. "A letter to Coralie," he answered carelessly, as if this assertion had been the most ordinary thing.

I took the paper from him. At the same moment, the elevator reached its destination and stopped. Nolan started to open the door, but Owen touched him on the shoulder.

"Just a minute," he said. Then to me: "Read it before we get off. We're safer here."

So it was, that, poised in the cage of an apartment house lift—fantastically poised on the threshold of the scene of our greatest adventure—I read the strange message I find transcribed among my notes:

Coralie, daughter of the Kanarjians: Greetings. The brooch I made three hundred years ago charts the destiny of all those of our blood who are born under the sign of Virgo. Thou wert so born. The opal represents moonlight, and moonlight is thy soul. It is written that thou shouldst be under the empyr of a Capricorn man until the day when this message comes to thee. It will be borne by the mortal hand of a Scorpio man, and thou must seek him silently, wisely and swiftly at thy very door.

The signature was incomprehensible to me. It covered the width of the page, and was in the flowing Armenian script which suggests nothing so much as the decorative flourishes of an expert penman.

"Owen—my God! Did you fake this?" I gasped.

"Not at all. I got it through automatic writing. The signature and all. Just after you left this morning. Then I summoned Vulpia, and—but we have no time to

spare for talk right now. Let's to work!"

Slowly, so as to cause practically no noise, Nolan slid open the doors of the elevator, and we stepped into a corridor that ran the length of the building from north to south. Immediately opposite was a double door. Its great panes of glass were draped on the inside with yellow silk. It did not look like a formidable barrier, but we knew that it led merely to an antechamber. Down the corridor were three other doors, of solid wood in each case. No windows broke the monotony of the wall.

We prowled cautiously along, and I at least could not imagine how matters were to be brought to a head. It was one thing to have a cryptic communication for Coralie, and quite another to get to her without Buwalda's knowledge. Nor did I feel sure that it would compel her to react favorably to us. The sinister influence of Buwalda might easily prove to be the stronger factor.

IN the meantime, there was acute danger of a physical counter-stroke, a sudden fusillade from ambush, that would wipe us out instantly.

Upon reaching the first of the smaller doors, I followed Owen's example and pressed my ear against it. Not a sound could be heard in the apartment beyond. Results were similar at the second door. But at the third, I could distinguish the faint rustling of a woman's dress, the tapping of feet on a carpeted floor and the sound of small objects being moved around on a table. I received the impression that we were listening in on a woman's boudoir.

Owen straightened and looked at me. He raised one eyebrow sardonically, and spoke under his breath, with a barely perceptible motion of his lips:

"Oh, to be a mind reader at this moment! It may be Coralie in that room, and it may not. If it is she, Buwalda may be with her—or a servant."

He placed his hand to his forehead, and for half a minute there was a silence which seemed absolutely crushing. It was broken by the wailing of sirens on fire engines. The latter were coming from several directions, and were evidently converging upon the building in which we were.

"More help for Buwalda," whispered Owen. "The firemen will soon batter their way into the house. And a squad of bewitched policemen at their heels! Hm! Now, listen to me. Step back with Nolan to the double door there, and fire a revolver bullet through the glass."

"Do—do you really mean it?"

"You heard my orders. Obey!"

In a sort of stupor, I returned softly down the corridor. Nolan came with me, but said nothing. He was obviously impressed at last by the bizarre dangers that surrounded us. I drew my automatic from my pocket, leveled it at one of the panes backed with yellow silk, and pulled the trigger. The silencer muffled the report, but glass tinkled and crashed, and an irregular gap was opened in the door. My eyes moved toward Owen. He was holding the message to Coralie in his outstretched hand, but he waited—waited—for a few seconds, actually, though it appeared much longer.

Abruptly, he stooped to the floor and pushed the paper under the door. He rapped with his knuckles on the wood, and then withdrew a few paces.

My glance wavered between my brother and the pane of glass my bullet had wrecked. Which of us would draw the fire of the enemy first, I wondered. But the seconds continued to pass, and no doom overtook us.

In spite of the fact that my mind had been prepared for it, I was astounded by the next development. The door near which Owen was standing swung open from the inside, and Coralie Griffin stepped into the corridor. She looked about her wildly. With a convulsive movement, she pulled the door shut behind her. The letter from the old astrologer, her ancestor, fluttered in her clenched fingers.

Owen leaped to Coralie's side. He took her by the arm and guided her rapidly in our direction. His head was bent close to hers. He spoke to her, too low for me to hear. I would have given worlds to know what he said to her. A swift gesture with his hand told Nolan and myself that we must return to the elevator, and the four of us crowded into it simultaneously. At the last moment, revolver shots spat wickedly at us from the apartment. But the door of the elevator was already closed, and the bullets flattened themselves against the bronze.

"There's a vacant flat on the next floor down," said Owen. "We'll get out there."

**H**IS voice was cool, almost icy, and the interior tension which had been holding the muscles of his face stiff was not wholly smoothed away. I had never admired him so much as I did at that instant. By separating Coralie from Buwalda, he had performed a wonderful piece of strategy. It came to me in a flash, why he had had me fire at the front door. It had been for the purpose of drawing the medium to the point of attack, of making sure that Coralie would be alone when he slipped the message to her. A desperate gamble, but the result had been worth the risk.

On the fourteenth floor, Owen produced a master key and let us into a huge empty apartment. There was a rough deal table standing there, however, and some kitchen chairs. Paperhangers had been using them. We laid the pots of paste and rolls of wall paper to one side, drew up the chairs to the table and sat down. Only then, did Coralie look closely at me.

"I—I have seen you before," she remarked in her soft, uncertain voice. "Ah, yes, I remember! It was at my uncle's house. You—you frightened me that day."

"There was some misunderstanding. I meant no harm," I replied lamely.

"You had come with Peter. You were Peter's friend. Now you are with these strangers. It all puzzles me."

"He was sent into your life by the first owner of the brooch," said Owen smoothly. "Just as I was sent today, when I was made the bearer of that letter to you from beyond the grave."

His words left me vaguely uncomfortable. I could not help wondering whether he believed what he had stated. His own experience with automatic writing might be genuine, but my meeting with Coralie at the Kanarjians had been planned by ourselves. Was it not stretching the point to maintain that the old astrologer had inspired us? The woman, however, accepted it as a self-

evident truth. Clearly it thrilled her. "I see! I see!" she murmured. "And now I am commanded to leave Mr. Buwalda. There can be no doubt of that. It was written!"

She seemed curiously indifferent at breaking the bonds that held her through long months. A new spell was upon her. She gazed at Owen, fascinated. Suddenly I understood that it was her rôle to be a perpetual worshipper of the man—no matter who he might be—who was strong enough to use her passive and mysterious powers.

I had anticipated the next move, yet its results were none the less shocking to my nerves. My brother drew a pencil from his pocket, and dropped his hands into his lap. I was sitting beside him and could observe exactly what was done. He gave Coralie an intent, cryptic stare, then stabbed with the pencil at the leg of the table. The former passed clear through the latter, as easily as a sharp dagger would pierce cheese.

At the same moment, a series of snapshot pictures reeled across my brain. The adventure of the séance at Baltic Street was duplicated, but this time the sorcerer was Owen. I saw tangled groups of men—police-men, firemen and citizens in plain clothes. They were running here and there, beating on doors, climbing stairs and galloping down long hallways. The scenes lacked continuity. I could not tell where the action was taking place. It was as though I had been enabled to cut in upon random episodes of a large panorama. And even as I watched, a change came over the conduct of the shadowy men. They halted in their mad course, glanced doubtfully about them, and commenced to slink away. I am describing the events of a very few seconds of actual time, yet I received an impression that was definite and wide in its scope.

Then abruptly, the motion picture was cut short. Owen had drawn his pencil beyond the far side of the leg of the table. The ending of this physical demonstration of thought had also terminated the mental phenomena in my brain.

**O**WEN leaned across the table to Coralie. "You hold that the success of your séances with Buwalda must be credited to the magic properties of the brooch," he snapped. It was an assertion he had uttered, not a question.

"Yes. Oh, yes!" she answered. "Mr. Buwalda thought so, too. He told me so."

A faint smile crisped my brother's lips. "He was a wise man," he said. "Now, let us go."

We all arose and took a few steps towards the door. But of a sudden Coralie stopped and grabbed frantically at the shoulder of her blouse. Her hand flew up and down her chest, fumbling and patting on the silk.

"It's not here," she gasped. "Oh, this is terrible! I left it on my dressing table."

"The brooch?" asked Owen, leaning close to her.

"Yes. I mustn't go without it. I can't give it up. I can't!"

"Buwalda would think it a great prize, wouldn't he?"

"But, of course! He would give his right arm to own it. If he has already found it, he will fight like a mad wolf to keep it."

"Which means that we must get the brooch back for you—at all costs," said Owen. I thought I detected an undertone of grim irony in his voice.



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He folded his arms, and mused for an instant. Then he turned to me.

"Peter Kanarjian has just arrived downstairs, Hugh. I want you to fetch him. We need his help. Take Nolan along with you. We will wait here."

"But the lobby is besieged," I protested.

"You will have no trouble on that score."

"And you—so close to Buwalda up here. Is it safe?"

"I should think you'd understand by this time, Hugh, that I've become the most powerful man on earth," he replied slowly. "I have nothing to fear."

His words sounded like a sinister boast. A chill congealed my heart, I did not know why. But I obeyed him blindly. Followed by Nolan, I walked from the room, entered the elevator and rode down to the ground floor. An extraordinary state of affairs awaited me there. The front doors of the building had been smashed in. The furniture in the lobby had been overturned. There were gashes made by fire axes on all the doors. The carpet had been trampled by scores of muddy feet. Yet the sole person visible was Peter, who leaned against a marble pillar, an expression of complete bewilderment on his face. I rushed to his side.

"Coralie was not at the house on Seventy-Second Street," was the first thing he said.

"I know. She is here," and I told him briefly what we had been doing.

"Thank God, she is safe!" he muttered. He passed his hand over his eyes. "Five minutes ago, Hugh, this lobby was full of raving lunatics. I entered just as they had started to swarm up the stairs. Then suddenly, they turned around and walked out. What does it mean?"

"Never mind talking about it now. We are needed on the fourteenth floor."

We hurried to the elevator, and in a few minutes were back at the apartment where I had left Owen and Coralie. The latter were nowhere in sight, though the door stood wide open. We called their names and ran from room to room, searching for them. It was soon quite clear that they were not in the flat. Peter and I stared wordlessly at each other. We sensed a tragedy.

IT was the logical thing to suppose that the missing ones had moved against Buwalda, for the purpose of recovering the brooch. Abandoning the lift, we ran down the corridor and stole up the flight of stairs that led to the next floor. The scene there was unchanged, generally speaking. The glass pane I had broken with a bullet still gaped jaggedly. The door through which Coralie had come to us was closed, as we had left it. But on the floor in front of it I caught sight

of a woman's lavender handkerchief. She had carried that handkerchief. I had noticed it, rolled into a ball between her fingers, as we had sat at the bare deal table in the empty flat. The only explanation of its presence here was, that she had brought it back, had dropped it before she retraced her steps through that door.

"Peter, they are in Buwalda's apartment," I cried. "We must follow. God knows what has happened to them!"

His tired face darkened, as the blood surged to the surface and mottled his skin. He clenched his teeth, and without answering me he drove his shoulder against the door. It was locked from the inside and did not give.

From the direction of the main entrance, I thought, I heard the echo of a laugh. Then came the hellish racket of an automatic revolver discharged at short range, and bullets hummed about our ears.

*Can the Purcells triumph over the sorcerer, Buwalda, safely entrenched as the latter seems to be in his apartment-house fortress? The battle between them is now a struggle to the death, which must be settled before many more minutes have passed. Do not miss the outcome, as told in the next issue of GHOST STORIES, on the news-stands November 23rd.*

## Has Iceland Proved that Ghosts Exist?

(Continued from page 39)

ium and several among the audience sing to it.

This is how they begin here, these witches' sabbaths. The inexperienced feels as if he is half in a church and half in a mad-house.

There is now semi-darkness in the hall; nevertheless, we see the medium plainly. He is sitting motionless on the chair with his hands clasped on his chest, as people saying their prayers are represented in pictures. After a little while he may be seen to make some starts, like involuntary jerks. All of a sudden his head and his hands fall down and the body seems to become limp. He sits in a stooping position on the chair with his head drooping.

THE President makes a sign to the musician. The candle is put out, and, when the tune has been played through, the music ceases. The medium has fallen into a trance and is unconscious. The hall is now pitch-dark and silent as the grave.

In a few moments' time the medium breathes deeply several times; especially, he inhales deeply so that it is plainly audible all over the hall. It is as if he is gasping for breath. Then suddenly he says in a voice entirely different from his own:

"Good evening. How are you?"

"Good evening!" "How are you?" "How do you do?" These and other such greetings are heard in different voices from all directions in the empty space which is supposed to be unoccupied. Most of the voices seem to be near the medium, but some are a good distance off—even right out in the corner of the hall, or up at the ceiling. It is as if the empty space has suddenly become alive with people.

"Of course, this is nothing but ventriloquism," is what one thinks at once.

But all these voices have the characteristics of so many individuals, each one speaking in his own fashion, with his own pronunciation and displaying his own mode of thinking which always remains the same as long as the individual manifests himself at the séances. The voices as a rule announce their names, and these are always the names of deceased people. If one has known them, it cannot be gainsaid that the voice and mode of thinking are generally similar to those of the persons when they were alive. In the majority of cases these are Icelanders, but occasionally they are foreigners.

"No doubt the medium has known these people or heard of them, and now imitates them," is what one thinks. One wonders at the stupid simplicity of anyone who could believe that there is here the question of anything except an ordinary mountebank doing his tricks in the dark.

All of a sudden a husky, stentorian voice shouts something close to one's ear. The ring in the voice clearly indicates that the words come through a trumpet. This comes so unexpectedly that one is startled. The trumpet had been previously standing on the table. Evidently it had been moved, for the voice now seems to be higher in the air. Somebody must be holding it. No doubt it is that scoundrel of a medium. But—hold! Now the trumpet has got to quite a different place where the same stentorian voice is shouting something through it.

Well, he is on the go, that beggar, one thinks, taking it for granted that the medium is dancing about in the empty quarter with the trumpet. One of us now shouts to the watchman asking him what the medium is doing. He replies that the

medium is sitting motionless on the chair, and that he has never left hold of his hands.

Then it is somebody who is sitting on the front bench, is what one concludes. So that is how it is—there is some scoundrel who under the cloak of piety has conspired with the medium. Of course, it would be a simple sort of magic to walk a few steps up to the table, take the trumpet, and then go silently with it among the audience. Fancy the credulity of believing that dead persons would bellow like that in a tin funnel!

Now the medium speaks with the counterfeit voice which purports to be that of a dead man of renown and claims to control all the invisible army attending the seance. He expresses a wish that the organ should be played and that the audience should sing while the medium is brought into a deeper trance and more power (that is ectoplasm) extracted from him for the next manifestations.

Again a hymn tune is played and a verse sung to it, but that is not enough. Then is sung the lullaby, "Bye, bye, the wending," or some other song. One does not quite like this medley of religious and secular poetry. But it is like everything else in this witches' den; it is all different from elsewhere.

SUDDENLY, the music-box starts playing a tune, but it is no longer where it was before. It sounds as if it is circling at a great speed near the ceiling, and possibly striking against it. The ceiling, however, is so high that nobody could reach it, and besides, the music-box is heavy. While the music-box is thus hovering about, there is silence in the hall. No footsteps are heard which could indicate a man walking about the floor with the music-box. These movements are, therefore, rather strange.

"What is the medium doing?" we ask the watchman.

"He is sitting motionless but trembling," is the reply. "I am holding both his hands."

It now appears to us as certain that this "manifestation" is caused by the same rogue who was going about with the trumpet. No doubt he is one of those sitting on the front bench. That fellow ought to receive his wage. We shall remember him at the next seance.

The music-box now comes down on the table again with a thump.

The "spirit" with the stentorian voice exults in his feat to have managed to move the music-box, and roars with great self-satisfaction through the trumpet.

The tumult now grows. The big trumpet on the iron frame takes a start and then tumbles over. The tin funnel is thrown about the floor with great noise. Then begins the table, jogging backwards and forwards on the floor with much thumping, for it is no thistle-down. Finally, it turns upside down. Then one of the benches upon which the people are sitting is jerked and pulled out into the empty space. Everything that is loose in that part of the room is now more or less in motion.

Amidst all this stir and bustle, voices are heard speaking; sometimes knockings are heard on the walls, and one can speak to these as well as to the voices. If you ask for one knock, it is given, and if you ask that the ceiling or some other place not easy of access be struck, a big blow is at once heard on the spot indicated.

We take it for granted that all this is natural. It is evident that there must be some trickster at large, causing all this commotion in the dark. It is, nevertheless, rather difficult to understand it all. This chap must be incredibly nimble and quick to cause all this tumult without anybody becoming aware of him. We think of various kinds of devices that might ease his task—poles, cords, et cetera—but we feel that they would be anything but satisfactory. The man must possess most unusual skill in jugglery.

Further, there are the voices speaking, many of which cannot be distinguished from those of living people. They reply unreservedly when spoken to, sometimes humorously, sometimes solemnly, just according to the individual inclination of each one. We may happen to converse with a humorist making fun of everything, or a deceased clergyman may raise his voice and say a pathetic prayer. The voices of those appearing for the first time are hardly intelligible but gradually become plainer as time goes on.

THESE "dead" people are questioned about anything between heaven and earth, but little benefit is derived from their answers, and it is not unusual that they commit themselves to actual misstatements about things known to persons who are present. They seldom have a clear recollection of their life here. The answers received vary greatly, but most of them are unlike what one would expect from the spirits of eminent personages. As a matter of fact, what better could be expected if this is all nothing but ventriloquism and jugglery on the part of the medium and his assistant?

But to continue our account of the seance. When the tumult and conversation have lasted for about two or three hours without interruption, the voice of the invisible con-

trol asks that a tune be played while the medium is aroused from his trance. The medium appears to be sleeping a natural sleep while this is being done.

After a short interval, the voice of the control suddenly shouts close to the ear of the medium:

"Wake up!"

The medium groans and grunts in his sleep, and asks to be allowed to sleep on. He takes a short nap, and the voice again shouts:

"Wake up!"

But the medium only starts, groans, and falls asleep again. The voice shouts once more, and the medium jumps up in consternation. He is somewhat confused and asks if the members are present. When a light is lit, he again starts and turns his face away from it. Apparently, he is not fully awake yet; he staggers out of the hall hardly able to keep on his feet.

The audience file out of the hall conversing about various things that have taken place during the evening.

It is refreshing to get out into the open air again after having been so long shut up in this witches' den; it is a treat to be once more in a natural atmosphere. Here there are no unaccountable voices speaking from all directions, no invisible hands thumping on the walls, and no inanimate things whirling about as if they were mad.

Well, we have now lived to attend a spiritualistic seance. We have seen a sample of this new magic. Let us remember the impostors at the next seance and be better prepared to deal with them.

WHAT we witnessed during our first evening with the spiritualists was, of course, nothing but jugglery. There was, so to speak, no precaution taken, except that the medium was watched—that is, if the watchman (Professor Nielsson) was to be trusted. Anyone sitting on the front bench might easily sneak into the empty quarter, talk, roar, put all things there into motion, and, in short, cause all this row. One rogue might have been responsible for all of it. The medium could certainly afford to pay such an assistant. Fraudulent dealings in these matters have repeatedly been detected in other countries.

Still, taking everything into account, the assistant must have had an astounding skill in his art. It is doubtful if many, even with the best of will, could match him.

On the front bench—who could it have been? We know most of those who were there. Who could be the impostor? To be fair, none of them is of doubtful character. Nevertheless, one of them must be guilty.

To be sure, there might be another explanation. The assistant may not have been one of the audience. Possibly he entered the empty quarter through a secret door. Perhaps there is an entrance through the floor of that pulpit-like lectern, or some movable panels in the wall.

It would also be easy to hide some strong cord in a chink, have it pulled from outside and made to catch the things on the floor. They could easily be moved and turned over in this way.

Perhaps that somebody sitting near to the front has a long pole under the bench with which he pokes the things in the empty quarter.

Or, if a strong electro-magnet was hidden somewhere and used for attracting the iron funnels—

No wonder that many strange things happen, for almost any sort of jugglery may be practiced here with impunity.

Are the members of the Society really blind that they do not see how easily they may be imposed upon?

The best thing to do would be to interview the President of the Society and ask him for stronger measures to be taken at the next seance to guard against fraud.

We find the President at home. He is in high spirits and asks us if we did not think some of the things strange that happened at the last seance.

Not wishing to be rude, we do not mention what we found strangest of all—namely, how credulous the audience seemed to be and how insufficient were the means of precaution that were taken. We say, however, that it is necessary to prevent the members of the audience from being able to go into the inner quarter containing the things. What would he think of stretching a close-meshed net across the hall?

He says that it has been proposed to do this, but that it has been delayed and neglected; that it is not at all a bad idea, though it is unnecessary, for old members know quite well that nobody thinks of cheating in that way.

"There is no doubt about these phenomena," he says; "they have been proved over and over again abroad. And the best proof that there can be no question of fraud here, is that the phenomena give many indications of being genuine. Those who are most familiar with the subject are the ones best able to judge of this; and besides, there have often been taken such precautions that to suggest fraud is out of the question."

In the end, however, we are promised the net before the next seance.

"I suppose it has been faithfully ascertained that no doors or trap-doors provide entrance to the empty quarter?" is a question put by us. "No secret contrivances in the loft or the cellar?"

"There is certainly nothing of the kind. The house has been built under our supervision. There is no cellar under it and no loft, for the roof is flat. The linoleum on the floor would soon betray any interference. Besides, these questions can easily be settled by examining the room before the next seance. You are at liberty to do so, and I should be glad if you would do it, so as to preclude any suspicion. For us older members it is unnecessary to look for this, because we know that nothing of the sort is to be found. There is no question of imposture here."

"GREAT is thy faith," we think as we say good-by to him. We have, however, gained something. Maybe the assistant will find his way thwarted a little when he discovers that a net has been strung across the hall.

We arrive a little before the opening time of the next seance. When we open the door of the hall, we are confronted by a magnificent net reaching from the ceiling to the floor. It is made of strong yarn and the meshes are so small that it is quite impossible to get a hand through them. It is fastened on all sides with lists which are threaded through the meshes and screwed firmly to the walls, the ceiling, and the floor. We examine and find the lists are securely fastened, and the knots of the meshes are firm and do not slide.

In the middle of the net at the bottom

there is a slit providing an entrance to the empty space which comprises one third of the hall. We creep through it to examine this part of the room. We examine the floor. It is covered with linoleum which is apparently sound, with closely joined edges. Then we look at the walls. They are ordinary, unpainted panels. No suspicious joinings, or movable parts are detected. Each panel is nailed down in the ordinary manner.

In one corner there is a cupboard in the wall containing a motley of small things. We examine it, lock the door, and seal it.

Finally, there is the ceiling. It is of panels like the walls and nailed in the usual way. We examine the lectern, the chairs, the table, and the few other things that are in the place. Every movable article is carefully searched for secret contrivances, but nothing of a suspicious nature is found. And no hidden cords are to be found.

We now take the table and other movable articles which were so close to the medium that he might have reached them with his hands or feet. These we move eight to ten feet away. In the center we leave only the two chairs on which the medium and the watchman are to sit.

**T**HE members now begin to arrive, and we take our seats on the front bench outside of the net. The medium and the watchman go in and seat themselves on the chairs. The slit in the net is carefully threaded together with a string, the ends of which are then sealed. I put the seal in my pocket.

The seance now begins in the same manner as before. A hymn tune is played, and the audience sing the hymn. We sit silently on the bench, but we cannot help thinking that things will be quieter than they were at the last seance. All access to the inner quarter is now barred, though, of course, it is still possible to poke through the net with a stick, and, perhaps, in that way push the things about. But, as already stated, there did not appear to be anything of a suspicious nature in that part of the room.

The longer we muse on the possibilities of anyone practicing fraud, the remoter they seem, if the watchman may be depended upon. Happily we chance to know him personally, and are convinced that he will not knowingly do anything dishonorable—if anybody can be trusted at all. True, we did not undress the medium and examine his clothes. Some auxiliary contrivances might be secreted there—but, anyhow, his hands are to be held.

No, the things won't stir tonight; that is a certain thing. If they are pushed with a stick from the outer quarter, it ought to be easily detected. They won't shift them far tonight—these invisible chaps.

We wake up from these musings when the control greets us as previously:

"Good evening. How are you?"

We return the greeting cheerfully. We have a clear conscience, knowing that we have tried to guard against fraud of the simplest character. He speaks of the innovation of having the net put up, but he says he does not know whether it will impede the manifestation or not. It is best to see how it goes.

"Well, he does not like it," is the thought that strikes us. He is not so sure of being able to play football with everything, now that the things are out of reach of the medium.

The same voices greet us and talk as before. Some of them may, however, be new. Among other things they speak of this new-fangled arrangement of the net. The "spirit" with the stentorian voice does not despair of his ability to move things in spite of this. Inwardly, we fancy that it will be on the Greek calends when he redeems that promise.

A fresh tune is now played and the audience sing while the medium is falling into a deeper trance. We become all ears to listen if anyone should move on the front bench. Who knows if someone may not smuggle a stick through the net for the medium to move the things with? But we hear nothing.

Suddenly we are startled by hearing the music-box play a tune and circle around in the air at a great speed.

We at once ask the watchman what the medium is doing. He says that the medium is sitting motionless in the chair and that he is holding both his hands.

If the watchman were not a man of unquestionable integrity, we should have no hesitation in calling him a liar. It is impossible for us to believe that he is wittingly telling an untruth, but we cannot help the fancy: is he right in his mind?

There must be somebody at large in the inner quarter for the music-box to move like that.

It now falls on the table with a great thump. The old familiar voice roars through the trumpet that he has not been at a loss to move the music-box though it was further away from the medium than usual. He is proud of the feat and asks us what we think of his performance.

"The damned fellow!" we think. But we say nothing.

There now begins the same game as at the previous seance: every movable thing goes mad and tumbles about. It is anything but quieter than it was on the former occasion.

We ask the watchman repeatedly if the medium is really sitting still on the chair, and always get the same reply. We strike a match once or twice, but only see the medium sitting in the same position as stated by the watchman.

At last the seance comes to a close in the same manner as before. As soon as the lamp has been lit, we examine the seals. They have not been touched. We go into the inner quarter to search for anything that might indicate the cause of the row. Unfortunately we find nothing—not a whit.

The President is not without an air of importance when he asks us what we think of the phenomena. It evidently amuses him how meager are the answers we give.

**R**ETURNING home after the seance, we find that we are not in the best of spirits. Our mind seems to be in a state of confusion. We cannot think of anything but these wonders, and we repeatedly ask ourselves how it may have been possible to practice fraudulence. As a matter of fact we recognize various possibilities, but they are all highly improbable—a desperate case to accept them.

We now understand better the unshakable faith of the members of the Society. No wonder that they find these things strange.

To be frank—for the first time we experience a doubt. The conviction that all this is nothing but fraud is not the same as before.

Is it possible that the members are right? Are these phenomena due to something supernatural—to ghosts? Are the wonder-stories of our popular traditions historical facts? And those of the religions? Do men really live after death, and reappear to throw things about, rattle with music-boxes, and roar into tin funnels?

Unquestionably any madhouse is a heaven compared with this Ghost Club and their seances. Remarkable that this does not drive people mad.

Nevertheless—wherein does the fraudulence lie?

With these thoughts in our minds we fall asleep; and it is marvelous that we do not dream of ghosts and other wonders the whole night.

The following morning we wake up refreshed after the night's sleep. We remember vividly all the occurrences of the previous evening, and all the doubt and confusion which we felt in the darkness and strained atmosphere of the seance, have vanished.

It must be fraudulence. Only, the impostor is cleverer than we thought. Who on earth can vouch for every individual in a large hall crowded with people? As a matter of course the medium will have to be undressed. It is also necessary to scrutinize the watchman. No—don't let us be deceived by this jugglery. We must investigate again, and this time more thoroughly. If we continue to learn from every seance, and gradually tighten the vigilance, we are bound to expose the impostor at last—and by Jove, we will give him his due!

It is plain that it would be better to have only two or three persons present. It is easier to follow the movement of so few. The entire hall ought to be ransacked before the seance, and there ought to be no music, for with silence it could easily be heard if anyone moved about, a trap-door opened, or anything of the kind happened.

My friend and I go to the President. He must be induced to allow a seance of a few people only. He seems to resent our continued scepticism.

"You yourselves have seen the furniture hurled about by unseen forces," the President said. "Can you doubt it?"

He considers a private seance an unnecessary bother, but all the same he agrees that observation would be easier and surer among a few. He promises us a seance, but on the express condition that it be thoroughly utilized, and that everything be examined beforehand so as to obviate doubtful questioning afterwards. We gladly promise to do this faithfully.

We await this seance somewhat impatiently. This time it ought to be fairly easy to make it difficult for the medium's assistant to roam about at large.

No effort is now spared in examining everything as minutely as possible. The hall is searched from floor to ceiling and also every article that is in it. Nothing seems too trivial to be suspected that it may in some way serve the purpose of the impostors.

This is no joke, either. It is a life-and-death struggle for sound reason and one's own conviction against the most execrable form of superstition and idiocy. No, certainly nothing must be allowed to escape.

We undress the medium and examine his clothes. The watchman invites us to examine him. The door is locked and sealed and also the cupboard in the wall. The slit in the net is not fastened this time. We are

sitting close in front of it, and can watch it. There are only five of us present now: the medium and his watchman on the chairs inside the net, and we, the two unbelievers, with the President between us on the front bench.

It is rather a lonely position—five solitary persons in a large room. There is neither music nor singing now. Will the medium fall into a trance without this?

Everything goes smoothly. He becomes unconscious in the usual manner. The light is extinguished. The watchman says he is holding both hands of the medium.

The control of the invisible greets us. He asks us to be prepared for unusual disturbances, for there are present some new and uninvited guests. As it is doubtful how friendly their inclinations are, he advises the watchman to be careful never to leave hold of the medium, whatever may happen.

We hear at once two new voices speaking from different corners in the space inside the net. Their language is not exactly what one would call exemplary. Presently things begin to move about, and this time a great deal more violently than before, some of them creaking as if on the point of breaking.

The watchman says that the medium is sitting motionless and that he is holding both his hands. On striking a match, we find that this is true.

The chair under the medium is now roughly snatched away and thrown out into the corner. It sounds as if it were broken. The watchman rises to support the medium, who is very weak. His chair is immediately thrown away, neither of them having anything to sit on now. The watchman asks for the chairs to be brought back to him so that he need not leave hold of the medium.

I offer to go in and fetch the chairs, and a match is lit while I slip through the net. I can see the two men standing in the center, and every article inside the net. The chair is lying out in a corner. I make for it, and in spite of the dark I find it at once. The very moment that I turn round to take the chair I am struck a heavy blow in the back, as it were with a closed fist. Yet a few seconds previously there was nothing to be seen in that corner. I forthwith take the chair to the men and find them standing exactly as before.

"Did you move?" I ask the watchman.

"Not an inch," was his reply.

I fetch the other chair without any hindrance. I then return through the slit in the net, not without a feeling that the march of events is now overwhelming my expectations.

SOME moments later the watchman shouts, saying that things are getting serious, for the medium is now drawn up into the air with his feet turned towards the ceiling and his head downwards; and that he is pulling at both the medium's shoulders. We hear a good deal of struggling going on, the combatants shifting backwards and forwards across the floor. The watchman says that the medium is pulled with such force that he is put to the limit of his strength to keep hold of him.

After a while the pull is slackened, the medium sinks slowly down, and the watchman manages to put him on the chair. All is now calm. We hear the voices whispering something about having to "fetch power." Sometimes they appeal to the control, demanding of him, by fair means or foul, "power" from the medium. He flatly

and curtly refuses their request, asks them to be quiet, and says that he can let them have no power whatever.

Everything is so quiet that it seems as though these fellows have gone. We overwhelm the watchman with questions, but he offers no explanation. The medium is in a deep trance, he says.

Suddenly the commotion starts afresh and the voices speak again. The chairs under the medium and the watchman are time after time snatched away and finally broken to pieces. The medium is pulled up into the air with so much force that the watchman, as he says, is repeatedly almost lifted off the ground. All this is accompanied by so much scuffling and struggling that, apparently, it is going to be unavoidable to go to the aid of the watchman, who is exerting himself not to let the medium go—up into the air!

The scuffle is now carried towards the lectern. Suddenly the watchman shouts that things have taken a dangerous turn, for the legs of the medium have been quickly pulled down into the lectern while the small of his back is resting on the edge. He fears that the medium will not be able to stand this and that it will result in disaster, for while he is pulling at his shoulders with all his strength, "the others" are pulling at his legs.

We are about to go inside to give assistance when we hear some still rougher scuffling, and the watchman says that everything is again all right. He has, he explains, put one foot against the lectern and in that way has been able to pull the medium out and get him on the floor.

The tumult now ceases. These fellows seem to have exhausted their strength. We hear them again threatening and entreating for "power," and finally they agree to go and fetch "power."

"From where do they fetch that power?" we ask the control.

"Goodness knows," he replies. "Perhaps from somewhere in the town, perhaps elsewhere. At any rate they do not get it from here. People of this stamp are not admitted as long as we can prevent it."

The watchman is standing in the center of the floor with the medium, who can hardly stand on his legs. He is at a loss for something to sit on, for everything serviceable has been broken.

"It is no use fetching chairs," says the watchman when we offer to do so. "They will be broken at once. I think I shall try to take him to the lectern step and let him sit there."

After a brief pause, he speaks again: "I have got him there now, and with his knees squeezed tightly between my own and his arms pinioned by mine, which are tightly clasped around his waist, I think there will be some difficulty in pulling him far away."

We strike a light and see that the watchman is firmly holding the medium in the fashion described. If the medium is tightly held in that position on the narrow lectern step, we fancy it will not be an easy matter to lift him.

THE invisible fellows now trot over the floor again, whispering together. Presumably, they have now brought with them the "power" they went to fetch, and so we may expect something to happen on a big scale. We wonder what kind of diabolical "power" they bring. All this fetching of "power" seems grossly ludicrous and silly—

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or, rather, contrary to everything that is known about natural forms of power and their transportation.

We are roughly and abruptly awakened from these musings.

The lectern is suddenly given such a pull that it sounds as if everything was breaking.

All at once there is a terrific crash and in the same instant a heavy thump. Something very weighty falls on the floor. Before we have time to realize what can have been broken, we hear the voice of the watchman shouting. He is on the floor inside the net close to our feet!

"Well, what is happening now?" he cries. "I really believe the lectern was torn up. I am amazed. We were both thrown up into the air and then on the floor. The lectern step simply tossed both of us up. How could this happen?"

I can feel something bulging through the net, near the bottom, and find that it is the corner of the lectern. I take hold of it and challenge the spook to pull it away if he dares.

"Eat hell," is that polite gentleman's reply, but, nevertheless, he pulls at the wreck with considerable force and manages to drag it a little along the floor.

The watchman finds this reply so stupid that he cannot help commenting on it.

I cannot refrain from retorting in some complimentary term. By way of reply I get some broken glass and other rubbish that was lying on the floor, thrown into my face. This was thrown from the empty quarter and from a different direction entirely to that of the medium and the watchman, who were lying on the floor close to my feet.

Who in the world was it that threw these things?

When the medium was thrown on the floor, the control said very quietly that he had been hurt a little. The medium himself gave no sign of pain although it was afterwards found that a nail had entered deep into his flesh.

After all this tumult there is a quiet interval. The watchman remains lying on the floor with the medium, for he thinks it is the safest place since not even the lectern could be depended upon. There is a large table on the floor near them; we tell him to get hold of it lest it be thrown on them if it is knocked about.

THE watchman fumbles about until he finds one of the table legs. He takes hold of it with one hand while the other arm is round the medium, holding him tightly.

Suddenly he shouts, "Now the table has gone!"

In the same instant the table falls top downwards on the floor close by with a great thump. The watchman says that it was lifted with such suddenness that he lost his hold.

"It was fortunate that neither of you got it on your head."

After this the tumult begins to slow down until it ceases altogether at last. Most of the time the invisible chaps are, however, heard whispering. It is clear that they are dissatisfied because they are not allowed to get "power" from the medium.

Finally, after a long seance, the medium is awakened in the same manner as before. The light is then lit—and what a sight inside the net! The broken wreck of the lectern is lying on the floor, and where it had

previously been, the wall is bare. Strewed all over the floor are, among other things, pieces of broken chairs, a broken water-bottle and glass, which had been on a shelf above the lectern. The watchman is tired, and bathed in perspiration after the struggle. The medium is very weak.

We suggest that everything be photographed in its present condition and so leave everything untouched. But we take the opportunity of examining the lectern and the floor underneath it, for these seemed the likeliest places for concealment of secret devices. Unfortunately we gain nothing by this, except the certainty that nothing was, nor could have been, hidden there. We also examine the nailing which seems to have been quite secure.

On our way home we again think of these wonders. Strange as they are, we are not so full of wonderment as after the previous seance. When one for the first time sees inanimate things move in an inexplicable fashion, he becomes thunderstruck. The next time he is prepared for "the devils to enter the swine," and so the surprise is lessened.

But wherein did the fraud lie this time, is the question constantly recurring to our minds. We rehearse the phenomena in every detail, and recognize that there is no possibility of explaining the lifting of the medium by supposed cords from the ceiling. On the whole, no part of the phenomena can be explained except in one way—the watchman and the medium must conspire in the fraud. It is also conceivable that the watchman has some sort of insanity which only manifests itself at these witches' sabbaths. At other times and under all other circumstances he is certainly a sane and intelligent man. One or the other of these explanations must be the correct one.

We try to convince ourselves that this is how it is, how it must be—but, all the same, we feel that to believe it is at present impossible to us. To doubt the sanity or integrity of the watchman is difficult for anybody who for years and years has known him and daily conversed with him.

Well, anyway, all that happened *might* have been caused by these two men, who most of the time were in the inner quarters under cover of darkness.

Of the two possible explanations—spirits or fraud—there ought to be no hesitation in choosing the one that the men, and not evil spirits, were responsible for the strange happenings.

In view of the circumstances we find this solution of the problem plausible, and even the only one that could come into consideration.

But—who threw the broken glass?

Who struck me in the back?

We can see no natural possibility that the watchman or the medium could, by any means, have done this.

If these two things could not have been done by them, was there any more reason to believe that the other phenomena were?

OVER and over again we consider what explanation there may be. At times we cannot help favoring the conclusion that neither the watchman nor the medium has been imposing upon us, and that things have happened as they appeared to do, inexplicable though they seem to us. In spite of all, the evidence for their genuineness is anything but insignificant.

But—who on earth can believe in such extraordinary and irresponsible forces? It

seems to us that we should never be able to do so even if we might see—and feel—all the phenomena in broad daylight.

We discover that daily experience and the teachings of science have developed into a kind of a faith in our minds. And this religion rejects wonders and miracles.

No doubt we had better sweep away all these troublesome fancies. Maybe we shall see the whole matter in a fresh light tomorrow. Small wonder that one gets a little confused and hazy, sitting in this magic den until midnight among a swarm of ghosts and in Egyptian darkness.

What is to be done after the last seance with all its bewildering ghost business? It is no use denying our failure—we have so far merely lashed the waves in trying to lay traps for the impostors of the Ghost Club. There are in this case only two alternatives: either there is no jugglery in the matter, or it is carried out with wonderful skill, which would be better employed for a nobler purpose.

We are placed in a difficult situation. On the one hand we cannot believe that these clownish tricks are connected with deceased persons. Indeed, the whole thing is contrary to all agreeable ideas of life after death. On the other hand, we see no feasible possibility of explaining the phenomena in a natural way. Certainly it would be easy for the medium to use fraudulent means in a small way—ventriloquism, moving of things close at hand, *et cetera*—but the bulk of the phenomena are of such a nature that the medium has no possibility of causing them himself by any tricks. We are, therefore, not much nearer a solution of the problem even if we find that some of the phenomena are fraud, conscious or unconscious, if most of them are in some way miraculous or inexplicable.

After the experience we have had, we do not entertain much hope of detecting fraud on the part of the medium, or being able to explain the phenomena. One has to tell the truth irrespective of likes or dislikes. Nevertheless, we must make further exertions. Perhaps we may have some unexpected luck if we continue to keep our eyes open.

True, we have examined the hall thoroughly and are convinced that it contains no secret door or contrivances. The most promising innovation, therefore, seems to be to try to get the medium for a seance at my own house.

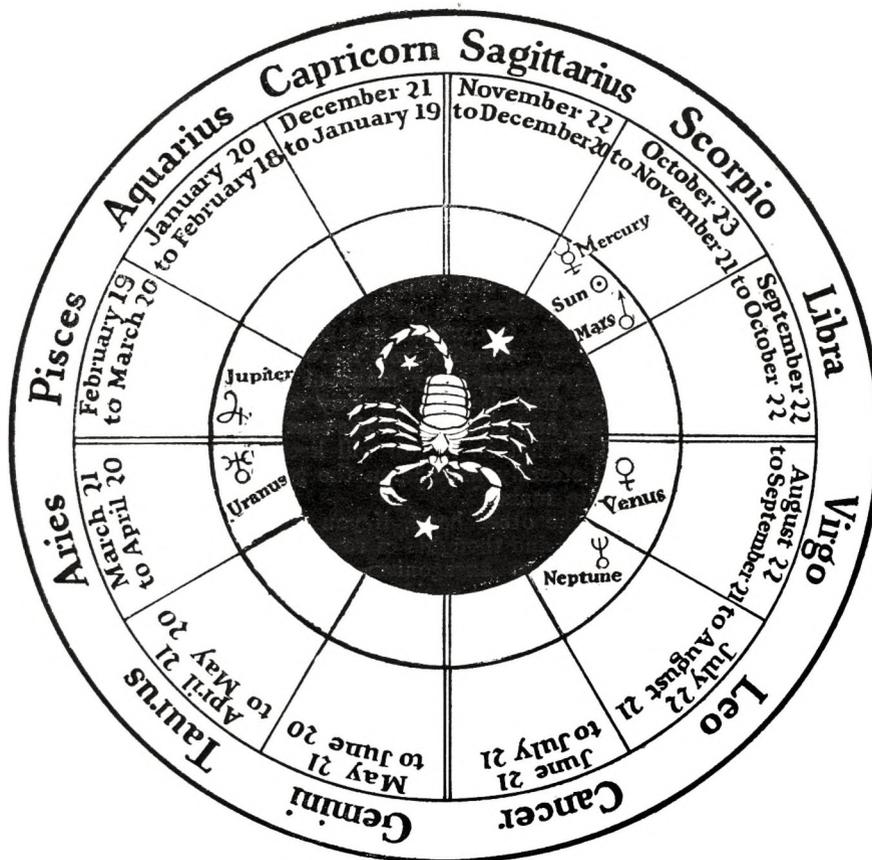
I DO so. It is unnecessary to describe the seances. They only served to increase my bewilderment. The medium's secret remained undetected.

I shall not attempt any further enumeration. It would make my account too long. But, finally, I want to mention that in spite of all observations I never discovered any dishonesty on the part of the watchman, who as a rule, was in charge of the medium and to whom I have repeatedly referred above. On the contrary, as far as I was able to judge, his observations were very keen and accurate. On a single occasion, only, I found a slight and excusable misunderstanding due to the darkness of the room. This man has had better opportunities than any other to observe the phenomena. To be constantly deceived he would have had to be more than blind. His verdict on the phenomena is that there can be no doubt whatever of their actuality; and he is a trustworthy man, highly respected by everybody.

# Were You Born in November?

Let the Stars Indicate Your Fate

By "Stella"



THE CHART TO GUIDE YOU TO SUCCESS

**M**ystery, secretiveness, passion! Such are the hallmarks of Scorpio, for its children are either the best or the worst of the human family. Never can the Scorpion be neutral or moderate. Always he goes from one extreme to the other.

The bloom and the glory of Summer are gone. The brooding grey-green of its trees in their full leafage and the misty blue of its distant hills have been followed by the riot of color that the gentle Venus spreads over the earth in the Fall of each year, and now, as the Sun enters Scorpio and the Hunter's Moon hangs low, the colors fade to the sere and yellow of decay. But death is the gateway to life, and the Scorpion with its sting becomes the Eagle which soars to the heights of regeneration.

The children of Scorpio come into the world between October 23rd and November 21st. They have strong passions and must fight fierce battles, especially with

themselves. But they are the great explorers, not only of new lands but also of the secrets of nature and of science. They are capable of heroic deeds and of the highest wisdom, or they may sink to the lowest depths of depravity and crime. They choose deliberately the path they will follow and by sheer force of character overcome trials and temptations which would conquer those who sometimes criticize them.

Those dark, compelling, and mysterious eyes of Scorpio! They look into your very soul and appear to read your secret thoughts. Yet, if the truth must be told, the children of Scorpio are rather uninterested in people, as such. It is only to the chosen few that they give their confidence. Their loves and hates are fierce and passionate. They love with an intensity that is often devastating, and their pride and jealousy frequently lead them into deep waters and are the cause of much suffering to themselves and to others. They are

implacable in their hatreds and will wait for years to get their revenge.

Given sufficient incentive, they work with the same intensity as they love. Lacking incentive, they drift carelessly through life and fail to make use of the powers they undoubtedly possess.

Throughout 1925 and 1926, the planet Saturn was slowly passing through the sign of Scorpio and at some time during this period, all those born under this vibration must have felt his restricting influence, either through finances or health. However, he has now finished his work as far as the Scorpions are concerned and will not bother them again in the same way for another 28 years.

Neptune also has been sending them unfriendly vibrations at various times since 1914 but is now only interested in those whose birthday comes between the 20th and 23rd of November. This mysterious planet mixes up things terribly. He causes more misunder-

standings than any other planet, and to one of your intense nature, if you are a Scorpion, he may bring suffering as well as unpleasantness. Neptune magnifies and distorts. He strikes at you through your pride and especially through your jealousy. Under his influence you may imagine that your sweetheart is interested in someone else, that your wife or husband is untrue to you, that your friends are saying things behind your back, and that nobody cares for you.

And, unless you take yourself seriously in hand, you will brood and worry about these things until what was probably only a misunderstanding becomes a reality, and you find yourself really separated from the one person you wish to be with. All this, Neptune does—and more. He confuses your judgment in business matters and entangles you in visionary and impractical schemes. Keep away, therefore, from the man who promises to make a fortune for you overnight.

Do not touch the investment that seems to offer an unreasonably high rate of interest—at least, until the end of this year.

During September and part of October Jupiter has been sending you his most helpful rays, and you should now be in favor with those in authority. Jupiter brings good fortune, success, and financial gain through business dealings on rather a large scale or through the help of persons in a better position than yourself.

He gives you success through your father, through the church, and through law. He improves your health and protects you from other adverse influences.

At the present time, Jupiter is particularly interested in those born between the 15th and 20th of November, but he has not altogether lost interest in those born a few days later. He is very favorably inclined towards the Piscarians whose birthday comes about the third week of March and the Cancerians born about the 20th of July.

Each year, as one's birthday comes round, one's enthusiasm is renewed by the powerful vibrations of the Sun, which then passes over the place it occupied at birth. Your birthday is therefore a time for mental house-cleaning, when all destructive and worrying thoughts should be swept away and green-eyed jealousy should be deliberately trampled under foot.

All Scorpions should now gather together the wonderful strength and power of their sign in a determined effort to make the most of life.

**T**EMPESTUOUS Mars is now passing through Scorpio, one of the signs that are thought to come under his rulership. This fiery vibration will increase your initiative, burn away many of the obstacles that lie in the way of your success, and give you all the energy you need. That is, if you will keep your mind steadily fixed upon the goal you wish to make.

On the other hand, if you give way to anger and thoughts of revenge, Mars will stir up antagonism against you and may bring accident and disaster to your door.

The most fortunate days during November are the 16th, 17th, the morning of the 22nd, 28th, and the early morning of the 29th. The 8th, 15th, and

24th are not so fortunate and, therefore, are not good days upon which to commence important undertakings.

For active work of a constructive kind or for exploration, the 3rd, 4th, 10th, 12th, 17th, 20th, 25th, 28th, and 29th are favorable days. If you wish to make love, buy pretty clothes, or decorate your home, choose the 6th, 9th, 14th, 17th, 19th, 20th, 25th, or 30th; or, if you are seeking a position or a favor from anyone, let it be on the 3rd, 4th, 12th, 16th, 18th, 22nd, 26th, 29th, or 30th and not on the 2nd, 15th, or 23rd. The 16th and 22nd are especially favorable.

To those born about the 22nd of December or the 20th of April, Neptune promises romance and pleasant happenings that will long be remembered.

To the Leonians born August 23rd, the Taureans born May 21st, and the Aquarians who came into the world about the 19th of February, Neptune is on terms of secret enmity. They will suffer just as much as the Scorpions, but their reaction will vary with their characters. The Leonians will suffer periods of extreme depression but will never quite lose courage; the Taureans will suffer through their feelings and may temporarily lose interest in life to such an extent as to make themselves sick; the Aquarians will say little, but will think and worry a great deal.

And when the experiences which Neptune brings have passed, Leo will greet the Sun once more with a smile which may hide a secret heartache. Taurus may forgive but will never forget, and Aquarius will make allowances and will continue his search for truth.

## Vengeance House

(Continued from page 29)

"But—but——" Mrs. Parker was unable to go on and tears came to her eyes.

A few days later, notwithstanding the baby's illness, we moved to our new home. My memory is so pregnant with the grief that followed as to make it painful even now to dwell on it. It began with mother's announcement to father after our first night in the new home.

"I dreamed about the baby last night," she said, "and it was horrible. Are you sure he's all right?"

"**C**ERTAINLY," said father. "Now, don't let your nerves get the best of you here, my dear. We're out of that atmosphere now, so let's be happy."

But mother's fears increased during the day, and to please her, father called in a physician of note to consult with him.

"The baby is doing splendidly," was their joint verdict. "But you," the visiting physician said to mother, "must have absolute rest of mind and body."

She evidenced her relief and that night fell into a deep slumber. The baby was in the room with her and father. Shortly before daybreak father was roused by a light glowing on the bedroom wall. He sat

up in bed and saw that the light hovered directly over the baby's bed. It apparently came from nowhere. In his terror, however, the paternal instinct was first and his eyes went to the baby. He recognized the unnatural pallor on the child's face, showing in the dim light.

Forgetting the mysterious light, father leaped from his bed and hurried to the baby. His movement awakened mother and she stifled a scream as she saw the light. But she, too, disregarded all else for her child. The little one's pulse was irregular and he suddenly awakened with a sharp cry that ended in a convulsive shudder.

"Oh, God," cried mother "please let him smile once more."

And, as though in answer to her prayer, my little brother opened his eyes and smiled wanly. Suddenly the light began to move nearer to the child, and he saw it. An expression of terror came into his eyes, but remained only for a moment. The smile returned, and with that innocent peace lingering upon his face, the baby died. And, as his body relaxed in father's arms, the light on the wall disappeared, leaving the room in darkness. The silence was broken only by the hushed sobbing of

my mother mourning her cruel loss.

The doctors, with my father in accord, concluded that the baby died from a sudden hemorrhage and contraction of the larynx. His death served, however, partly to clear the mystery that had come upon us, though God only knows how our hearts ached beneath the burden of our loss.

**I**T was many months later that mother took us children on a late summer afternoon to visit old scenes and neighbors near the house of mystery. In all that time there had been no further visitation of trouble, no hint of anything to indicate that we had been chosen as the victims of some vengeful fate.

Twilight half concealed part of our old house from view as we passed on the way to the Parker home for a brief visit. Mrs. Parker greeted us cordially and gathered a great bouquet of flowers from her charming garden to present to us.

But in the house, her manner changed. She became suddenly depressed and hesitant. A dozen times she seemed to be on the verge of speaking, but closed her lips and was silent. Suddenly she leaned towards mother and tears filled her eyes.

"You think of me as a friend," she said. "And I think of you in that way, too. But I have not been your friend. I—I can't keep back my secret any longer."

She turned her face away, but sat on the arm of mother's chair and put her arm about mother's shoulders.

"It is a long story I have to tell—you must hear all of it," she began, firmly.

Mother bowed her head in ready consent and waited.

"When I saw you moving into the house next door, I wanted to warn you of the danger I feared. But my husband would not permit it. He thought it best for us to keep silent and I obeyed him. I have suffered for it—untold torture. And others have suffered because of my weakness."

Her voice faltered. She struggled for control.

"God forgive me!" Mrs. Parker cried. "If I had told you, your little baby would still be alive——" Suddenly sobs convulsed her.

"I know that you can't understand all this yet," she continued, after a few moments, "but you will. You see, we own this property. We have tried to shield the reputation of the house next door in order to keep the prices up in the neighborhood. We wanted to sell. If it became known—well, you can see what would have happened."

"Since the owner of that house went away," she pointed across the lawn to the shadowy old mansion beneath the trees, "every tenant has been frightened as you were."

"Five families have occupied the place in succession. Each one has had—death. Always a few days after the disturbance in the basement. If there is but one child in the family, it dies. If there are more, the youngest dies."

Mrs. Parker looked away and for a time was lost in thought.

"I think the place has been cursed," she resumed, looking straight into mother's eyes, "because of a terrible crime committed there. And the longer I live, the more certain I am that vengeance is the cause."

"That house," she motioned again

towards our former home, "was designed by a physician who had it built for his home, sanitarium, and office. He had an exceedingly fine wife and a lovely child, to both of whom he was devoted. For a while they seemed to be quite happy. They had plenty of money.

"They lived lavishly, though, and the son developed symptoms of tuberculosis. His condition grew steadily worse. A consultation of physicians recommended that a change of climate might prolong the child's life.

"Then there began a period of trouble. Worry over his son apparently decreased the doctor's efficiency, for his practice became almost negligible. Several of his patients died. After that, he had almost no practice at all. About that time, we began to hear that he was financially ruined—couldn't pay his debts.

"He certainly showed it. Then he began to avoid bill collectors, and they would come around to our house and to others in the neighborhood to inquire about him.

"Then one afternoon, from my window, I saw the doctor enter his house hurriedly. He seemed terribly nervous and his face was drawn as though he were in pain."

Mrs. Parker paused and her fingers intertwined in nervous tension.

"A few minutes later," she went on, "my doorbell rang and I answered. The caller was a gentleman—I recognized that instantly. He handed me a card which told me that he was a tailor whose name I had heard—he was of excellent reputation.

"HE asked if I knew whether the doctor was at home. When I hesitated, he explained that he had been there, but could get no answer. He told me frankly that the doctor owed him money and that he needed it instantly to complete an urgent business deal. I told him that I had seen the doctor enter his house but a few moments earlier.

"He thanked me, and I watched him as he entered the house next door. My chair was near the window there. An hour passed, and the tailor had not come out. I was curious—naturally. So I watched

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longer—all afternoon in fact. And still no one left the house.

"I told my husband about it, and he laughed. I had a strange feeling about it all—a premonition, if you want to call it that, but my husband just laughed. That night and until an early hour in the morning, there was a light in the room in which you slept—I could see it beneath the drawn curtain.

"The next day the doctor's family went away. He remained behind to close the house and dispose of the household goods. Then he, too, went away and the house was closed up. Two days later we read in the newspapers that the tailor had been reported to the police as missing. He had left home carrying a large sum of money, saying that he had a collection to make and then intended to put the cash into a real estate investment.

"You can imagine my feelings. The papers were full of it. My husband felt that we had no business to get into it unless we knew a crime had been committed. I argued with him and pleaded, but he was firm—do you understand my position?"

Mrs. Parker leaned forward anxiously and placed her hand on my mother's arm. Mother nodded quietly.

"I am trying to tell you the whole story so you will understand everything," said Mrs. Parker continuing her account.

"Well, the mystery died out in the newspapers. The police never found a clue. Rewards were offered for the tailor's body, or for information about him. But it was no use. He had disappeared completely."

Again the woman paused to pick up the thread of her narrative. She was under a visible strain, but had herself well in control.

"New tenants moved in pretty soon. Almost immediately they began to be dis-

turbed by queer noises in the basement and in the room you had. One young couple lived there—the mother ran into the room for her baby and found it dead. The doctors said it was strangulation, and she was suspected of doing it—think of it! And all the time I knew.

"It seemed that with every disturbance there was the sound of footfalls in the basement. And if there was a fire in the furnace, it was sure to be heaped up with more coal. I tell you now, and I have always believed, that the doctor killed the tailor and partially burned his body in the furnace.

"And I believe that he buried the remains beneath the cement floor in the cellar and—the tailor's ghost haunts the house. I'm sure of it—"

Mrs. Parker's voice broke and she was trembling.

"That's all," she sobbed. "I had to tell you. It's God's truth. I've wanted to tell you—and the others. I wanted to tell the police in the first place, but—"

Mother tried to comfort her, but was shaken herself by the knowledge that had come to her. As soon as she could, mother gathered us children together and left, after trying to quiet Mrs. Parker.

"It's over with now," she said. "Just try to forget it."

But at home that evening, mother told my father about the strange afternoon in minute detail.

"We'll have to find out about that place in the basement," he said. "I'll get in touch with Parker tomorrow."

FATHER was half inclined to take Mrs. Parker's story as the hysterical ramifications of a mind that had been too greatly strained. And yet, he admitted there must be some explanation. But, on the following

days, he had other duties and neglected the matter. Then, on an evening in late autumn, the mysterious old mansion suddenly burst into flame and the firemen saved a portion of it only after the most difficult sort of a battle.

After that, father more or less gave up the idea of searching for the mysterious grave.

Then mother met Mrs. Parker.

"The house had been vacant a long time when the fire started," said Mrs. Parker as the conversation inevitably turned to the subject. "We heard the disturbance in the basement that night. And about dusk we thought we saw a cat jump from the pipe at the side of the house. It was only a few minutes later that we saw smoke and then flame bursting from the cellar windows.

"My husband called the fire department. They managed to save part of the house, but the flames swept up from the cellar through that old shaft and cleaned out the garret. The secret passageway was destroyed and part of the basement. But strangest of all, the fire burned through the flooring to the room you used to have and ruined it completely. The firemen said it was natural for the flames to follow the draught up the old shaft."

"Has the place been rebuilt?" asked mother.

"Oh, yes. You wouldn't know it now," replied Mrs. Parker. "It's been altered completely, and so far there hasn't been a single disturbance." Perhaps the ghost has taken his vengeance—do you think?"

My mother slowly shook her head.

"I'm sure I can't tell, Mrs. Parker. I only know that there has been tragedy enough in that house—tragedy enough."

And her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her baby.

## Signed by a Ghost

(Continued from page 45)

admonished more moderately. "I don't want to be caught here! I know this much—Warren Aylmer was innocent of that job."

"How do you know that?" I queried, although I had been certain all along that Warren's protestations of innocence were genuine. That he simply could not have committed such a crime, I knew intuitively.

"I know because—because—" Deane hesitated. "Well, there's no use beating around the bush. I killed Peter Hawkes!"

"You killed him!" I was astounded by this sudden confession. "But—but why have you come here to confess this to me?" I asked. Deane twisted uncomfortably upon his chair. Then he looked straight at me.

"It's like this," he explained: "ever since I shot Hawkes—not that I regret it; not a bit of it, the dirty devil—I've felt worried about it. I didn't feel so bad until Aylmer swung for what I did; but when they strung him up, I *couldn't* forget about it. I kept thinking of it, no matter how hard I tried to forget. It has tortured me—nearly driven me insane—and I can't stand it any longer. I decided that I would have to confess—to someone. It's conscience, I guess; although I don't know why it should worry me so for killing that cur! He double-crossed me two years ago and then disappeared—but I swore I'd get him sooner

or later, and I did. I've laid awake nights, thinking, thinking, thinking! My God, it's been terrible!"

He groaned, as though he was filled with anguish at the recollection.

"**W**HYY didn't you go to the police and confess?" I suggested, a little gently, for I felt a bare degree of compassion for the man's evident agony of mind—even though I could not overlook the fact that he was the self-avowed slayer of a human being, and that his silence had caused my best friend to be led to the gallows.

Deane shook his head. "I couldn't," he said. "I didn't have enough nerve to give myself up. But I had to tell somebody, so I've come to you. Here—" he tugged at the interior of his coat and produced a folded sheet of paper from his breast-pocket—"is my written confession—signed. Give it to the police and clear the name of your dead friend."

I took the proffered document.

"Read it," said Deane, as he helped himself to one of my cigarettes from the table.

I read it, and found it to be, as he had stated, a signed confession to the murder of the late Peter Hawkes.

"Now that you have given me this, what do you intend to do?" I interrogated.

"I'm going to beat it," vouchsafed Deane,

briefly. "Don't try to follow me. I don't intend to be taken alive."

And, with this reply, he was as good as his word—getting to his feet and continuing to cover me with his weapon as he backed out of the living-room. Then I heard him running, as swiftly as his bulk would permit, along the outer corridor. A moment later the front door slammed—and he was gone.

I did not attempt to follow him. I knew that to do so would have been foolhardy and futile. When I was alone again, I decided that I needed the solace and stimulus of tobacco, so I secured my pipe and some tobacco from the table and sat down to smoke and think over the queer visit of Howard Deane, the murderer.

For about half an hour, I suppose, my brain was active with mingled thoughts of the dramatic visit and confession of the murderer, the unhappy fate of my late chum, and what might be the outcome of my taking the written confession of Howard Deane to the police station on the morrow. And I had not forgotten the weird incidents of the lights, the clammy thing brushing against my cheek, and the feeling of horror and the awareness of something supernatural which had pervaded my entire being.

Abruptly, my mental speculations were put to flight; for I was alarmed

suddenly by the sound of a dismal, hollow moan, which came from the passage without. My scalp tingled, and I could feel the blood receding from my face.

The sounds seemed to be approaching gradually nearer to the closed door of the living-room. Fascinated, yet horrified, I kept my eyes focused upon the door.

I knew that it was going to open presently! And it did!

What I then beheld in the doorway caused a cry of horror to well up and die within my parched throat. The incident of the light, the clammy touch in the dark, and the subsequent visit of Howard Deane, all had tended to make me highly-strung; but now this—this frightful apparition—was almost more than I could bear. I covered my eyes with my arm; but immediately I did so, I felt compelled by some psychic power to look again.

Then I recognized its features. It was the ghost of my friend—Warren Aylmer! He wore the garb of a condemned man, and there was a noose about his neck! The rope had left its bloody mark on one side of his throat.

I was too terrified to speak. Semi-exhausted, I sank down further into my armchair. I watched, paralyzed, while the Thing came steadily toward me.

The dreadful shade of Warren Aylmer halted barely three paces from me, and stood regarding me with a frightful, solemn gaze. I felt that I wanted to shriek, and to rise and run from the odious phantom which confronted me. But I could do neither—my throat seemed to have become contracted so that my voice was merely a hoarse, gurgling whisper, and I was as incapable of moving my legs as if my feet had been impaled or glued to the floor.

Peculiar noises were ringing in my head, and I felt weak and dizzy. Then, like a ship's siren moaning through a dense fog, the sepulchral tones of the specter fell upon my ears.

"You have nothing to fear, Will," it said, slowly. "I have not come here to harm you. Why do you fear me so?"

I licked my dry lips and gritted my teeth as I tried to shake off my terror, and reply. After what seemed to me an age, I managed to blurt out, in a voice entirely foreign to my own, a disconnected reply.

"I—I can't help—feeling scared," I gasped, and my voice became a little stronger as I exerted a greater effort of control. "I—know you—will not harm me; but you look so—so ghastly, Warren!"

The specter emitted a hollow laugh; but it seemed to die when only half uttered, and change to a dismal wail, which was followed by an agonized groan. I shuddered violently at the awful contrast. It was terrible.

"For heaven's sake, Warren, don't groan like that!" I cried. "I can't stand it! You will drive me insane!"

The spirit lifted its arms upward and then dropped them again, accompanying the action by a slight drooping of its head, as if in despair.

"I cannot help myself," said the ghost. "Until I have punished the man whose silence caused my death, I must continue to suffer untold agonies, and my spirit will never rest. You must try to bear with me patiently and overlook my involuntary groans. This is the last time you will see me upon this earth."

Then, with frequent interpolations of

horrible groans, the apparition continued, and I braced myself and bit my lips until I drew blood while I listened.

"I was innocent of the murder of Peter Hawkes; but, as you know, I was hanged, while the assassin escaped unpunished," said the spirit. "But I have learned, since death, the identity of the murderer—and I followed him tonight, invisibly, to your house. He cannot escape my wrath. I shall settle accounts with him before I leave this house—forever."

"I know that you were innocent, Warren," I interrupted. "And it is not long since the real murderer was here. But I'm afraid you are too late to settle with him here. He has gone, and I don't expect he will ever return; for, after holding me at bay with a revolver, he gave me a written confession to the murder, and then made his escape. Here is the confession—" and I took the piece of paper from the table, unfolded it, and held it out before the wraith for its inspection.

The specter chuckled grimly. Without another sound, it extended one of its pale arms and snatched the paper from my hand. Then, suddenly drawing the noose tighter about its own neck, the ghost passed a finger across its throat, thereupon wiping off two drops of blood, which it flecked with a quick motion onto the document—immediately below the signature, as if in endorsement. The phantom reversed the paper, held it out for a moment so that I could see it, and then replaced it in silence upon the table.

"You need have no fear that the murderer will escape," asserted the specter. "I know, for all knowledge is accessible to the dead."

"And have you appeared to me to enlist my aid?" I gasped.

The specter shook its head.

"No," it replied. "I need no earthly assistance. I came merely to let you know that justice is about to be done, and to forewarn you in case you unwittingly interfered with my object and so came to grief. You are my friend, and I would not have you suffer at my hands. But, in order to avoid the possibility of this happening by accident, it was necessary for me to appear to you and give you warning, before leaving you forever. I must leave very soon."

"THEN there is nothing I can do?" I asked, a trifle relieved by the assurance that the ghost of my friend was soon to depart.

"Nothing—save to obey my injunctions carefully," answered the specter. "You must retire to your bedroom immediately—and do not leave it, on any account, during the rest of the night."

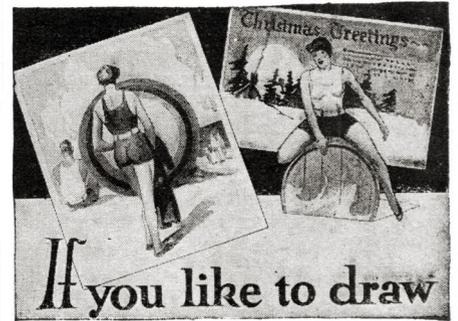
Although rather puzzled, I readily agreed to comply with the wishes of my departed friend, for I felt that I wanted—more than anything else at that moment—to be alone.

"Then I suppose it is to be farewell, Warren?" I said.

"Yes; good-by, Will," replied the ghost. "May we meet again upon the other shore, from which there is no complete returning. Go, now—and do not forget what I have said."

These were the last words which I ever heard the specter utter, and, as I rose unsteadily to my feet, it stood aside to let me pass, and I staggered and reeled, rather than walked, from the room.

Badly shaken, I climbed the stairs to my room. I got into my bed without troubling



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to remove my clothes, and attempted to sleep; but I could not succeed in losing consciousness. I was in a nervous agony and I did not know what monstrous thing to expect next.

About ten minutes, I imagine, after I had climbed into bed and let myself sink exhausted upon the mattress, I heard a dreadful wail, and then a blood-curdling shriek, which seemed to come from immediately outside my door. This was closely followed by a heavy thud; then everything was as silent again as the tomb.

I sprang out of bed and turned on the lights. My first mad impulse was to dash wildly from the room; but I became terrified at the thought of what I might encounter outside my door. Next, I thought of jumping through the window, but fortunately refrained from executing this rash intention; for, had I carried out my resolve, I must surely have injured myself seriously—perhaps killed myself—upon the spikes of the iron fence below. Finally, I decided to lock the door and remain on the alert until daylight.

It was a nerve-wracking ordeal waiting for the slowly-dragging minutes and the

seemingly never-ending hours to pass. I smoked cigarette after cigarette, until the air became heavily-laden with the fumes.

Streams of icy perspiration were trickling across my forehead and down my face, and my hands shook unsteadily, while my knees felt numbed and weak, when the dawn broke at last and the first rays of external light crept into my room.

I rose, shakily, from where I had been sitting upon the side of the bed, and stumbled to the door; but I was so weakened that I staggered against it and fell to the floor in a heap. Then I must have lost consciousness.

When, finally, I regained my senses, sunlight was streaming through my window, I felt stronger, and, summoning to my aid all the moral courage I could muster, I scrambled to my feet, turned the key in the lock, and opened the door.

There, on the very threshold, lay—the body of Howard Deane, the murderer. His eyes were bulging horribly from their sockets, and his mouth was half open in a terrible grimace of fear and terror. His hand clutched a small roll of bank-notes. He was dead—all too evidently dead.

I telephoned for the police, and when they came in response to my message, they asked me how I accounted for the presence of Deane in my home. I told them all that I knew of the whole diabolical affair—but whether Deane had returned to my house to recover something—the roll of bills, perhaps—that he had dropped in his flight, or whether he came back to ransack the place at leisure, or whether my dead friend sought him out and transported him bodily to the corridor near my room, I did not know.

When I had told them everything—including my belief that the ghost had caused Deane's death by intense fright—they ridiculed the story.

They said that death had resulted most likely from a fatal seizure of apoplexy that had occurred while the man was robbing my house.

I wish I could accept their view. But I can still visualize too plainly Deane's fearful corpse with its distended eyes and distorted features. And I know of no possible human explanation for that blood-spattered confession, which is now in the possession of the police.

## The House of the Living Dead

(Continued from page 11)

the lobby of the Hotel Trevaylor at a quarter of eight that evening.

Elsie rang me up soon after I got back to my little apartment, to remind me that I had promised to take her to the theater that evening. It was, however, always understood that such engagements were liable to cancelation if the Doctor had need of my services.

"But what is this engagement?" she asked over the wire; and the fear in her voice was manifest.

"Nothing but a banquet of professional magicians at the Hotel Trevaylor," I answered.

"And you must go?"

"The Doctor wants me to." And I added that I was leaving for the South with him within a few hours. "I'll try to see you before we start, Elsie," I said. "I don't know how long we shall be away, but—"

I heard a stifled sob at the other end of the line. "Arthur!" came Elsie's pleading voice.

"Dear, what is it?" I asked. "You know I can't turn the Doctor down."

"I'm afraid, somehow. I must see you. Can't I come to this entertainment?"

"WHY, it's not an entertainment; it's a banquet," I answered. "You see, Elsie—"

"If I can't come to the banquet, I'm coming to the Hotel Trevaylor, at any rate, to see you," came Elsie's voice. "What time will you be there?"

I told her. "But I shall only be able to see you for a few minutes, and I can't go home with you," I said.

"I don't care, Arthur. I want to see you. I must see you. I've had such a terrible feeling all day, as if something was going to happen to—to both of us."

"You mustn't give way to such feelings," I told her. "There's nothing wrong."

"Well, I hope not, but, anyway, I'm coming." And I knew that it was useless

to try to make her change her mind.

I passed the remainder of the day in a condition of perplexity. Could it be true that Martinus and the evil forces he had fought so long were really coming to the decisive battle? Or was Martinus—well, was he altogether sane? Did not such work as we had undertaken, naturally unbalance one to some extent, at least, in judgment?

The first person I saw when I reached the lobby of the hotel was Martinus in conversation with Elsie Morton. They had met before, and, of course, had recognized each other. The Doctor's expression was full of warning.

"I have asked Miss Morton to come in as my guest, Branscombe," he said. "There will be three or four other ladies present. Miss Roth, of Cleveland, is one of the cleverest magicians in the country, you know. I hope you will enjoy the evening, Miss Morton," he added.

But, as we checked our hats and coats, the Doctor turned to me. "Branscombe, if you knew how this complicates matters!" he exclaimed, almost angrily. "However, there's nothing can be done about it now."

A handsome, large room had been reserved for the dinner. There were small tables scattered about, and at one end of the room was a small stage, with looped-back curtains of black velvet. On it was a cabinet and table, and one or two pieces of paraphernalia.

GATHERED about the room were a number of gentlemen in evening clothes, who might have been prosperous business or professional men, but were actually some of the most renowned magicians in the country. Among them were three or four ladies. And in the centre of this assembled group was standing a dark, handsome man of about forty-five, wearing a string of orders across the front of his evening coat, which fitted to perfection.

At the sight of Martinus, he turned and

came toward us eagerly, with outstretched hand.

"My dear Doctor!"

"My dear Chevalier!"

"After ten years! It must be ten years since we saw you last, Doctor."

"About ten," replied the Doctor indifferently.

"Those were great days, Martinus."

"I agree with you most cordially, Chevalier."

"The good days do not return. But greater ones may be in store for us."

"Who knows?" responded Martinus, with a smile and a bow. "Permit me to present you to Miss Morton, and to my friend and confrère, Mr. Arthur Branscombe, who is associated with me in all my enterprises." The Doctor emphasized that word "all."

As the Chevalier Morandi bowed over Elsie's hand, looking into her face the while, I saw a singular expression come into her eyes. At first, it seemed as if some nameless fear, under whose shadow she had lived, had suddenly appeared in all its threatened aspect. I saw her grow livid; her pupils dilated; a slight tremor ran through her body.

And I was afraid, horribly afraid. I knew that Elsie had become implicated in the web that was being spun. For good or for evil, I had brought her into the affair. There was something inscrutable in the Chevalier's look as for an instant he turned his eyes on mine. And I had been wondering how this smiling, pleasant-faced man could be the leader of the diabolical crew that was planning to enslave humanity. Well, I doubted no longer.

Then the Chevalier had turned from Elsie and had taken my hand in his, and I felt the pressure of a great weight upon it. I became icy cold. My arm grew numb. The banquet room grew misty, as if I were seeing it reflected in a mirror upon which a mist was gathering.

My brain was reeling. For a moment

or two I did not know where I was.

Then, out of some cavernous place, I seemed to hear Elsie crying to me. I saw her, to my horror, in the grip of a huge snake, a boa, that was slowly crushing the life out of her. All about me were the leering faces of fiends. She was lost to me forever.

No! As I exerted my puny force against the great bulk of the reptile, something snatched me by the shoulders, and bore me up, holding Elsie, toward the blessed light of day. And I came back to myself to find the Chevalier still gripping my hand and the Doctor's arm flung carelessly about my shoulders. The mist had vanished. But the Chevalier was no longer smiling.

"Yes, Branscombe is associated with me in all my work," Martinus repeated, and I knew that it was the deliberate acceptance of the Chevalier's challenge.

"Ah, he is a very fortunate man—doubly fortunate, if I may say so." The Chevalier's smile returned to his lips, and he looked at Elsie again, as if he already knew of our relationship.

"Arthur, who—who is that man?" Elsie whispered with livid lips.

I don't know what I answered.

I SCOFFED no longer now. I realized that it had been the merest child's play to the Chevalier to cast that hypnotic spell upon me. I understood that Martinus had intervened to bring me back to consciousness. And the little incident had been a trivial test—I had almost written "jest"—as when two strong men catch each other about the body and playfully attempt to throw each other.

At this moment a general move was made toward the banquet tables. And again it might have been a banquet of the Rotary Club or the Kiwanis, except for an occasional pleasantry, as when one of the guests carelessly juggled a round half dozen potatoes in the air, over his plate, and brought them back out of the waiter's pockets, or when another materialized a bottle of what certainly tasted like genuine Chartreuse out of a large silver dish containing roses.

The Doctor, Elsie, and I sat rather silently at our table, and listened to the chatter of the guests near by. There was hardly any professional talk.

Elsie, I noticed, only tasted her food. Once or twice she looked up at me, and I could see that she had sustained a nervous shock through the encounter with the Chevalier.

Had he tried any of his hypnotic tricks on her? Fearing to arouse the Doctor's displeasure, I did not try to question her.

After the dinner was over, some of the leaders of the profession were called upon to describe their latest marvels.

It would have been amusing under other circumstances, hearing these tricks described with almost infantile candor, yet knowing, as we all did, that the inventor was keeping back just the modicum of information that supplied the key.

"Come, Chevalier, show us something new from Europe," the gathering urged Morandi.

The Chevalier looked almost coy. "Really, gentlemen, I am sure we have nothing that is not known to everybody here," he protested.

"Nonsense, Chevalier! Show us some of your materializations."

"Ah!" Morandi smiled with satisfaction. "But I must tell you gentlemen that since my last visit to your country I have become a convert to spiritualism. My materializations are phantoms of the dead—"

Shouts of laughter greeted this statement. "Yes, gentlemen, materializations of genuine ectoplasm, produced through the agency of my familiar—" The Chevalier whistled.

Amid renewed shouts of laughter there appeared on the stage the most repulsive dwarf that I had ever seen. He was about five feet high, his skin a deep chocolate, his hair straight, not frizzed, and he was grotesquely clad in a sort of red and yellow striped dressing-gown that reached to his heels.

A member of some primitive race of the Amazon Valley, I guessed the creature to be, but a reversion to the ape-man; for the eyes leered under penthouse ridges, the lips slobbered, and, as the creature shuffled toward his master, I saw the outlines of the pot-belly under the robe.

The applause was deafening. "Gentlemen," said the Chevalier, mounting the dais, "permit me to present to you my familiar spirit, Mumbo, one of those elementals in human form without which no magician's outfit is complete."

"Want the lights down, Chevalier?" roared a jolly magician from Buffalo.

"Leave just a glimmer, please," replied Morandi. "The ectoplasm is unfortunately of a very retiring disposition, and white light shocks its sensitive nature—"

They roared again. The lights were switched off. Now I could just see the outlines of the Chevalier within the cabinet. The dwarf was not in sight—where he had gone, I did not know.

Then something like a swirl of white mist began to move across the darkened stage. It condensed as it drifted, until it came to rest.

Before the cabinet we saw the misty figure of a pirate forming. In one hand was a cutlass, and in the other was a fantastic round bundle—like a human head. As we looked, the figure became more distinct, and finally it stood before us as substantially as if the thing were flesh and blood.

I heard the whispers of the spectators. They were forming their theories as to how the thing was done. There was not one of those magicians who dreamed that he was witnessing an exhibition of supernatural forces.

Suddenly the figure of the pirate again grew misty, but the thing that he held in his left hand began to come into clearer view.

All at once, with inconceivable swiftness, the thing materialized, and we saw before us the gnarled and knotted hand holding up a freshly-severed human head.

But the features were my own! The head was an exact replica of mine!

Cries of astonishment, but mingled with others of protest, went up from the audience. There was probably no magician there who recognized the face as mine. No; the Chevalier's little jest was a direct challenge meant for Martinus and myself alone. I sat there, amazed by the miracle, conscious of a feeling almost of dismay. I hoped that Elsie had not recognized that head. I dared not turn to look at her.

But she had recognized it—how could she have helped doing so? Suddenly,



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with a piercing shriek that rang through the banquet room, she dropped unconscious from her chair. I managed to catch her just in time.

"Turn up the lights!" somebody shouted.

I gathered her in my arms and carried her from the room.

Elsie was all right in a few minutes. Martinus got us away, for I was half crazy with anger, and wanted to go back and have it out with Morandi. He waited in the taxi while I accompanied Elsie upstairs to the apartment that she shared with a friend.

"That fellow ought to be caned," I told her, "and I'm inclined to go back and do it."

But Elsie, facing me in the living-room, had such an extraordinary look on her face that I stopped short.

"I DON'T see why, Arthur," she replied. "It was a very clever piece of conjuring. Besides, it was my own fault for insisting on going there, wasn't it? Are you still contemplating that trip South?"

"I expect to leave at any moment, Elsie," I answered. "But don't be worried—"

"I wasn't worrying," she answered. "Only, Arthur, the time really has come for a show-down between us. If you accompany Doctor Martinus on that journey, you must not expect to see me again."

"Why, Elsie, you don't mean that!" I cried, aghast.

"I mean just that," she answered, in a hard voice that I had never heard from her lips before. "Which of us is it to be, Arthur?"

There was really something extraordinary about her manner. I watched her closely under the light. Her pupils were enormously dilated. I thought she was still suffering from the shock.

And then I remembered what Martinus had said to me: "They will strike quickly, and strike hard." And I was sure that in some way the Chevalier, who had created that illusion on the stage, was already at work.

"Elsie, are you sure you know what—"

"What I am saying? Yes, I know, and I mean it, Arthur."

"How can you ask me to leave the Doctor at a moment's notice like this? It's not reasonable, Elsie."

"And you're not reasonable," she cried, with a sudden outburst of cold fury. "You are jealous of the Chevalier, whom I'd never seen in my life before. Yes, you

know you are, and I hope you'll have reason to be. I tell you I'm through with you!"

"Elsie!" I was thoroughly scared. I could see she was not herself. But it was impossible to argue with her. She kept ordering me to go, her voice rising louder and louder.

I went out at last, helpless, beaten. I met Elsie's friend, Miss Serjeant, at the door. I told her Elsie had had a fright at the dinner, and seemed abnormal. I told her I would wire her my address, and she promised to wire back. And with that I had to content myself.

"YES, Branscombe, it is even worse than I supposed," said the Doctor, when I returned to him. "I want you to pack at once, and meet me at the Jersey City ferry. We shall just be able to make the night train for Nashville, I hope. I've given the driver your address."

I had already decided to say nothing to him about Elsie.

"From now on it is war to the knife between us," the Doctor continued. "Morandi was one of the half dozen persons who escaped the eruption of Mount Pelee at Martinique, when the town of St. Pierre was wiped out. You know that its destruction is regarded as a judgment of heaven?"

"I believe I've heard—"

"I'm sure you've heard. St. Pierre was the headquarters of devil-worship in the New World. Some of the accursed rites that were practised there came down directly from the Atlanteans, who, as you know, were destroyed by the submersion of their continent, because they had acquired knowledge of natural forces such as we hardly dream of, and used these powers infamously."

The taxi sped on through the prosaic streets, and I still could hardly believe that the little man at my side was literally fighting for the world against the powers of evil.

"The Chevalier must have been a boy when St. Pierre was destroyed," I suggested.

"I have known him for thirty years, and he has always looked as he does now," Martinus answered. "They say he is immeasurably old. Be that as it may, I know now that he means to establish his centre among the negroes of the South, where the voodoo cult makes the atmosphere sympathetic. And where better than in the Dacres place, which is doubly consecrated to evil by the voodoo outbreak and by the

evil aura that the old pirates left behind?"

"Yes, he is after the treasure, Branscombe, and that little drama of tonight was a direct challenge to you and me."

I packed hastily, and met the Doctor at the ferry. Our conversation upon the train was about anything rather than the matter at issue; and yet, as we sped southward through the night, I felt more and more strongly the desperate nature of the fight on which we had entered.

"Do you expect to see Morandi at our destination?" was about the only question I put to the Doctor upon the subject.

"On that point he has not seen fit to inform me," answered Martinus grimly. "But you can be sure that the Devil and his works are not likely to be far apart from each other."

When we arrived at Nashville after a rather hard trip, the Doctor refused to wait the seven hours before our next train came in. Instead, he went out and bought a motor-car. We flew over the roads in complete disregard of speed laws and traffic regulations. I gathered that the Doctor considered each moment saved as vital. Leaving Nashville at eight in the morning, we averaged nearly forty miles throughout the day, a pretty high rate of speed when one takes into consideration the condition of the roads we traversed.

By ten o'clock that night we had reached the swamp district along the coast. Two or three hours more should bring us to our destination, but we had no certain knowledge of the route, and, rather than go far out of our way on some lonely trail, Martinus reluctantly suggested that we camp for the night. Besides, it would be better to arrive early in the day.

We made a meal of the provisions we had brought with us, and slept uneasily in the car until the first streaks of dawn were in the sky. Then we resumed our journey, struck the road, and, about ten o'clock, found ourselves near our destination.

It was the most desolate country conceivable. We were traversing a mule road not far from the Gulf. We could feel the breath of the sea upon our faces. But land and water were so intermingled that there was difficulty in telling where one left off and the other began.

On all sides of us extended the forest of scrub oak, with knotted mangroves fringing the creeks, over which we passed by the craziest of bridges. Not a bird sang in that jungle; it was as if the curse of the evil deeds of Freeman and his pirate gang still hung over the land. One might

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picture unmentionable horrors occurring in the gloom of the brush, which might have been a jungle in the heart of Africa.

It seemed an endless journey before we emerged suddenly out of the swamps and jungle into the little settlement of Oak Valley. The swamps extended all about us still, but the ground was firmer, and close at hand I saw the Gulf, with a trim yacht lying at anchor close to the shore line.

IT was an unprogressive community, as a single glance sufficed to show. There was a public school, and another building, presumably the town hall, but Oak Valley consisted for the most part of a single straggling street, with a few houses of refinement set down rather promiscuously among the negro shacks.

The whole place seemed to brood beneath the shadow of the wilderness that hemmed it in. The few white men whom we saw stared at us indifferently from their doors. A negro, driving a mule along the street, glanced at us curiously. Martinus stopped the car and hailed him.

He was an old man, with snow-white hair and a figure bowed with toil. He pulled in his mule with a loud "whoa!" and turned to us.

"Where's the Dacres place?" the Doctor asked him.

I saw the whites glisten around the rolling eyes. "The Dacres place? You folks ain't shorely gwine to the Dacres place?"

"Why not, my friend?"

"Why not? 'Cause they got the ha'n'ts there, that's why. Nobody around hyar don't go to the Dacres place."

"And who is it haunts the Dacres place?" inquired the Doctor.

"Who is it? I'll tell ye," screeched the old man. "It's ole Mas' Eli, come back from the land of sperrits, and ole Tom Freeman, the pirate. And I'll tell ye something more. There's dead men walking there, dead folks, what's been burried long ago, and come out of their graves!"

"Don't take too much stock in these negro superstitions, my dear Doctor!" The unexpected voice came from only a few feet away.

I started in dismay. Unseen by us the Chevalier Morandi had stepped out of a store, where he had apparently been giving orders for provisions. He was sprucely dressed in yachting clothes and cap. He now stepped to the side of the car, bowing to me, and offering his hand to the Doctor, who took it. "They are a superstitious lot, these Africans. You and I, my dear Doctor, know that there is nothing not to be explained by physical causation. It is indeed a pleasant surprise to meet you and—er—Mr. Branscombe again so soon. You made a quick journey."

"NO quicker than yours, Chevalier," responded Martinus with equal blandness.

"Ah, well, I am accustomed to rapid flights," replied Morandi, laughing. "You took the Memphis route?" I was sure he had known. "I came through Louisville. My yacht has been lying off the coast for several weeks, and I was rather contemplating a visit to my place in Martinique. But now that you are to be guests of the Dacres—charming people, they say, though

I have not had the pleasure of meeting them—I shall certainly spend a little time here, in the hope of having you as guests aboard my yacht some time."

"That will be delightful," Martinus said.

"All leisure is delightful, and all work is abominable," said the Chevalier. "Take my advice, and don't overdo it while you're here—nor your energetic aide, Mr. Branscombe, either. The ghost of the Dacres place will never be laid, Martinus."

"I see you have added the role of prophet to your other distinctions, Chevalier."

"Prophet, priest, and prestidigitateur." Morandi smiled. "No, my dear Doctor, seriously, I advise you not to attempt to lay that ghost—by yourself. You should call me in as expert diagnostician, and, if the ethics of our profession permit, let us split the fees—ha, ha!"

"I am afraid we belong to different schools, Chevalier."

"Well, I suppose so," Morandi said, with a sigh. "Still, I have always felt that two such technicians as you and I ought to have combined, and made the world our oyster. I shall look forward to the pleasure of our next meeting, gentlemen."

"That was a brazen challenge," I said, as we resumed our journey.

"I have never quite convinced Morandi that I am not amenable to such propositions," answered the Doctor. "However, his presence here shows that he regards us as dangerous obstacles to his plans. He must have chartered special trains to anticipate us. In one way it is a good thing, however. It convinces me that there will be no delay in putting things to the test. A pleasant reputation the Dacres place seems to have locally," he added, as we bumped along the root-grown trail. "The Chevalier is fortunate in his locale."

There followed another stretch of seemingly endless jungle, and then another turn of the trail disclosed what was evidently our destination. There was a creek, with a slimy, sluggish stream running into it, its banks a tangle of mangroves. Almost to within three hundred yards of the house, which was situated on a little hummock, the ground was a swamp, and the trail ran over it on a causeway with a foundation of ancient cypress logs that were coming to the surface everywhere. The last quarter mile was the hardest traveling we had experienced.

There was a clearing of perhaps a hundred acres, or possibly a little more, behind the house, comparatively dry land, but on all sides the jungle growth was rushing in upon it in order to complete the work of ruin. As for the house itself, the central part looked very old; taken together, with its two wings, it was a rambling, picturesque old place, thickly covered with creepers; but, standing there alone, it impressed me with a sense of something uncanny.

We stopped in front of the house and walked to the door. As we reached it, Virginia Dacres appeared. There was a strange, set expression on her face.

"DOCTOR Martinus," she said, in slow,

even tones, as if she was repeating a lesson, "I think a mistake has been made. My visit to New York was a shopping trip, and not really for the purpose of consulting you. That was an afterthought. I think I was overwrought, and needed a change. There is nothing here that calls for your

investigation. I shall pay you for your trouble, of course, but there is really nothing for you to do. So, after lunch I shall show you the way to the station."

The girl's words shocked me into silence, I did not know what to think. But Doctor Martinus amazed me! He slapped Miss Dacres hard across the face.

She started, a shudder ran through her, and she seemed like one suddenly awakening. She stared at us with a bewildered air, then appeared to recognize us.

"Oh, Doctor Martinus, thank heaven you have come!" she exclaimed. She looked at the car, at me, and seemed to be trying not to show that she had been in an abnormal condition. "Perhaps you gentlemen would like to go to your rooms," she said. "William!" she called.

A tall, gaunt old negro shuffled out of the house. Behind him I saw an old, very fat negress in a voluminous apron, staring at us with all her might. "William will run your car into the garage," explained Miss Dacres, conducting us inside the house.

I managed to whisper to the Doctor, "She was in a state of hypnosis?"

"Yes, not far short of possession, Branscombe," he answered. "It looks to me as if we have arrived in the nick of time."

The interior of the house had been tastefully furnished in the prevailing style two generations before, but everything was wearing out. The rugs were threadbare in patches; the heavy mahogany furniture, with its faded brocade, seemed out of place against the shabby hangings. The paper was peeling from the walls, disclosing successive layers, and everywhere there was the musty smell of an old house.

Up-stairs, however, I caught a glimpse of brightly and tastefully furnished bedrooms. There was a very large room, occupying the whole of one side of the upper hall, with two rooms immediately opposite it, which Miss Dacres assigned to the Doctor and myself. I inferred that she and her brother had rooms beyond the swinging door that seemed to shut off the wing.

"Whose room is this?" inquired the Doctor, stopping at the door of the large one, which was slightly open. It seemed to me that Virginia Dacres was trying to shut off the view within by standing there.

THE girl yielded reluctantly to the Doctor's quiet insistence. "This was my grandfather's room," she answered. "Everything is as he left it. It is generally kept closed, but today—somehow—"

She was looking at us in an uncertain, perplexed way again. I followed the Doctor inside. The moment I entered, I felt a peculiar chill in the air. There was no reason for this, even if the room had been kept closed, for the sun was shining in at the windows, which faced the south. Yet for the moment I had the feeling as if I had stepped inside a tomb.

It was an enormous room, with a large mahogany four-poster bed at one end, and at the other a large recess with books on shelves lining the wall. Abstruse, learned works they seemed to be, and some of them were bound in leather, in the old-fashioned way. There were a table and a desk, with papers protruding from pigeon holes, while on a small tripod, against a background of dusty, dark blue velvet, was a crystal, in which those who are

gifted may see images. Upon the walls were two strange drawings. One was a pentagon, with rays of light extending from each of the five points. The other was a hand, palm up-raised, the fingers close together, and symbols, unintelligible to me, were spaced around it.

I knew what the hand meant, though. It was a Talmudic symbol, and, in the ritual of Cabalistic practice, represented Creation. I had seen something like it in one of the Doctor's books.

Suddenly Virginia Dacres hurried into the room, her face convulsed. She clung wildly to the Doctor's arm.

"Doctor, save me! Save me!" she cried.

Martinus supported her, for she seemed near swooning. This phase lasted only a few moments. A flood of tears relieved her. "I think I'm going mad!" cried the girl. "When you arrived, I was in such a mood as often falls upon me in this cursed place. I didn't know what was happening. I was almost asleep, and I didn't care. Lionel drove in the buggy to Four-acres Station this morning, to bring back Roger Chavard. He's going to spend the week-end here. And as soon as he was gone, I had one of those dreadful spells in which nothing seems real. Can you understand?"

"I'm sure I can," Martinus soothed her.

"Tom Snow and his wife, old Phoebe, who work for us, live in one of the cottages near by. They won't come upstairs, even in the daytime, and as soon as it's growing dark they hurry out of the house. That shows you what sort of reputation this house has. Tell me, have I seen my grandfather, whom I kissed when he was laid away in his coffin, or am I mad?"

"You are sure it was he?"

"I'm sure as I can be. It was on a lonely road leading out of the village. It was no ghost, for I heard his footsteps before I saw him, and he looked at me so dreadfully, liked a debased, wicked old man. I was so afraid, I ran, and if I had been able, to get my voice, I should have screamed. At first, I thought he was going to run after me.

"And others have seen him, too, and they have seen other dead people—old Bob Manton, one of the best negroes in Oak Valley, who worked for Mr. Simmonds, the liveryman, for forty years. He died last year, and he was seen prowling around one of the houses late in the evening. Every one is scared to death. They keep their lights burning till morning, and every window bolted. And—oh, it's too terrible—I've seen Mammy Nelly."

"The old negress who was put to death for killing the black child?"

"Yes—yes—yes!" she panted. "I told you how good we always thought her, and even now it seems impossible that she could have—why, she took care of Lionel and myself sometimes, when we were babies."

"Where was she buried?"

"Some relatives claimed her body. She was buried somewhere near here, I don't know how to explain exactly, but I know where it was. And I saw her—a face like a devil's, peering in at one of the windows!"

**S**OMETHING about Virginia Dacres' manner made my blood run cold, though the sun was still shining. Involuntarily I looked toward the window,

as if I expected to see the shadow of the old voodoo murderess.

Then the sound of wheels was heard, and, pulling herself together, the girl left the room. We followed, to find that Lionel Dacres and Roger Chavard had just arrived.

Lionel was dark, like Virginia. There was a strong family resemblance between brother and sister. I set him down as an unimaginative young man, well balanced, and decidedly not of Virginia's neurotic temperament. Roger Chavard, the county prosecutor, was a fine type of the aristocratic French-American, though there was nothing of the Frenchman about his manner—except, perhaps, the rather sallow complexion and piercing black eyes. His voice was clear and melodious; he seemed sure of himself—a well-bred type, born to success.

Lunch was served immediately by old, fat Phoebe, who, I noticed, kept her eyes fixed in terror upon Martinus, of whom Virginia had evidently told her, as if she expected him suddenly to perform some magical rites. After the meal, we strolled about the plantation, and Lionel showed the Doctor and myself the straggling acres, and the weedy crops.

"I'm doing my best," he said, "but it's hard to get laborers. They're a superstitious lot." That was as near as we got to speaking about the matter that we all had at heart, but it was, in effect, a declaration that Lionel placed his own interpretation upon the "ha'nts."

It was Roger who plunged into the subject that evening, as soon as Virginia had retired.

"Now about your visit here, Doctor," he said, "I may say that Miss Dacres's action in hurrying to New York in order to consult you, rather took us both by surprise, although, of course, it is, strictly speaking, no business of mine. Probably, however, if you are actually a physician"—Martinus bowed, a little ironically, but Roger was not disconcerted—"you have already placed the correct interpretation upon her act. In short, Miss Dacres is highly strung, and her nerves have gone back upon her.

"I may add," he went on, "that neither Lionel Dacres nor myself has the slightest faith in anything supernatural."

**T**HE Doctor bowed again. But it was not rudeness; it was the frank statement of a man accustomed to go straight to the point. I knew Roger Chavard's rather charming type quite well: he was a materialist, stubborn beyond conviction, ready to tilt against everything that to his mind savored of humbug, a tenacious fighter, but, withal, a fair one.

And Lionel was obviously to a great extent under his influence.

The Doctor had not taken offence. "What you say is perfectly straightforward, and I accept it in that spirit," he answered. "I understand the implication—namely, that I—"

"No, sir!" Chavard's protest was disarming. "You are going to suggest that my statement is an aspersion of your sincerity. By no means. While I do not admit that there is such a thing as the supernatural, I recognize fully the existence of a number of phenomena, thus far unclassified by science. These, I presume, you would ascribe to so-called spiritual agencies. Now, I do not believe in spiritual

agencies, but I do not therefore ridicule these things. Hypnotism, so-called mediumship, even—perhaps—the extrusion of what you call ectoplasm from a human body—all this I am prepared to grant. Why not? The intelligent man takes his facts as he finds them, it is in the interpretation of these facts that he is apt to differ from—"

"The unintelligent man," Martinus suggested, with a smile.

"I will not fit the cap on any man's head, my dear Doctor," countered Chavard. "No, let me say, rather, from the man who adopts theories that run contrary to the principles of science, as we know them. I ascribe all these phenomena to natural causes. And, so far as you are concerned, Doctor Martinus, I should like to be allowed to say that I have a particularly strong feeling of admiration for you, on account of your work in connection with the Brundage case."

I opened my eyes at that, for this was a case in which I had helped the Doctor trail down a particularly brutal murderer, the information supplied us having been given by the spirit of the murdered woman.

It was evident, however, that Chavard supposed the Doctor had obtained the evidence by some other means, though the full facts had been published—and scoffed at—in the newspapers.

"So," continued the lawyer, "I believe that we can work together in this matter, holding our separate, individual opinions as to the cause of the phenomena, but aiding each other, I believe that it will not be difficult to end this terrorism, which is simply the work of a gang of scoundrels. In fact, it is with this object that I have obtained indefinite leave of absence from my duties, on the ground of urgent private affairs. And heaven knows that's true enough!" he added, with a sigh, thinking of Virginia.

"I am heartily in accord with you on that point," answered the Doctor. "But I should like to know in a little more detail what has been happening here."

Chavard and Lionel Dacres looked at each other. "You have read, of course, of the outbreak of voodooism in this district," said the lawyer, after a slight pause. "It involved all the most bestial rites of the cult, culminating in the murder of a black child for a sacrifice. It is supposed to have been brought here from Martinique." This time it was Martinus and I who looked at each other. "Mammy Nelly, an old negress, who was one of the ring-leaders, was found guilty, and executed. Some of the leaders escaped. Those involved in a lesser degree received sentences ranging from a year or two to life imprisonment. I prosecuted the wretches.

"Unfortunately, the whole of this district is saturated with the cult," he went on, "and it is suspected that meetings for the purpose of voodoo worship still go on in the depths of the pine woods. As you doubtless know, these devotees will stop at nothing when their fanaticism is aroused, and the fear of their children being sacrificed has filled the harmless blacks around here with terror."

**R**OGER CHAVARD paused for a moment and then said slowly: "Undoubtedly there is an organization of white men at work. They are stirring up the negroes, and playing on their superstitions, in order

to depreciate land values. The fact that Lionel and Virginia were offered an extravagant price for this property proves this to the hilt. It may be timber rights they are after—"

"The buried treasure?" interposed the Doctor.

"Bah! If there was any treasure, it would have been discovered long ago. Whatever the object, there is no doubt that organized terrorism exists."

"What do you make of this story about the dead having been seen walking about the village?" asked the Doctor.

"Nonsense—damned superstitious nonsense!" Chavard exploded. "It all arises from the fact that Breithof, the New Orleans murderer, whom I hope to have the pleasure of sending to execution, possesses an accidental resemblance to my colleague in the voodoo case, Judge Shane, of Littlefield, who died recently. In fact, he was identified as the dead man by a number of witnesses. But such accidental resemblances are not rare.

"Doctor," he continued, earnestly, "pray dismiss all such superstitious notions from your mind, because we have to face a situation graver than you, perhaps, imagine. We've got to get this gang before they—get us!"

HE drew a newspaper from his pocket, unfolded it, and handed it to Martinus. "What do you make of that?" he asked, indicating a half-column with pencil marks on either side of the headlines.

Martinus and I read it together:

DEATH OF DISTINGUISHED JURIST

Judge Ballein Passes Peacefully Away in Sleep—Apoplexy Ascribed as Cause.

His honor, Judge Ballein died suddenly some time during the night as the result of an apoplectic stroke, according to the opinion expressed by his physician, Doctor Gregory, who was summoned by the dead jurist's valet when he made the sad discovery this morning. Judge Ballein had been in poor health ever since he presided at the notorious voodoo trial, and it is believed that the strain of conducting the case was largely responsible for his run-down condition, and, indirectly, the cause of death.

There followed a brief biography of the dead man.

Martinus folded up the paper and handed it back to Roger. Their eyes met and matched for a perceptible pause.

"First, my colleague in the prosecution, Judge Shane—then Judge Ballein, who presided at the trial," said Roger bitterly. "And, beyond doubt, I myself am the next one marked for death. Now, Doctor, do you realize that as yet we have only scratched the surface of this damnable conspiracy of murder?"

Martinus was about to speak, but Roger went on: "I ask you to dismiss all puerile, untenable theories of ghosts and spirits, and join with me in running down the men who are at the back of this thing. Lionel and I have talked it over. We are convinced that the next attempt will be made here, on account of the superstitious terror that the house excites in the minds of the natives. If we can catch the miscreant in the attempt, we can find a way to force

him to disclose the details of the plot. "We have decided to watch every moment, and I ask you and Mr. Branscombe to unite your efforts with ours. And I don't think it will be long before we have the clue to the mystery."

"You can count on Branscombe and myself to the utmost of our powers," Martinus answered.

What had struck me all along as strange, was that it had seemed so difficult to elicit any exact account of the alleged phenomena that occurred in the house itself. Martinus had evidently been struck by this, for he tried in various ways to obtain further information from Lionel, but with no better success. Afterward I was to understand the reason for this reticence.

We agreed to keep watch that night in pairs, two of us until an hour after midnight, and the others from then till dawn. The Doctor suggested that we should use Eli Dacres's room as a sort of headquarters, but this did not appeal to Roger.

"If anyone breaks in," he said, "we can catch him better down-stairs than up, that's sure. We'll camp in here."

THE Doctor gave way, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, and, leaving Roger and Lionel in the living-room on guard, we went up-stairs.

I had not yet seen the cellar, but I had a good idea of the house. It consisted of the old central portion, and two wings, shut off from it, above and below, by swinging doors. All the rooms in the wings were unoccupied, except for Virginia's bedroom, in the left one.

"We'll get no help from those fellows," said Martinus to me, as we went up the stairs. "Chavard's as sharp as a needle, but he's started off with an emphatic refusal to acknowledge what we know to be the cause of the mischief. We'll have to rely upon ourselves, Branscombe. And we've got a hard row to hoe, judging from the celerity with which Morandi came down to this part of the country."

I thought so, too. I could see that the Doctor was more agitated than he was willing to show.

The moment I stepped into Eli Dacres' room, where the Doctor and I were to rest until our turn to watch arrived, I was conscious of the same chill as before, the feeling that I had stepped into a tomb. Virginia Dacres had left the large oil lamp alight, but this only seemed to intensify the gloom in the unilluminated corners.

"The atmosphere in here feels decidedly unpleasant," I said to the Doctor.

"Decidedly so," Martinus agreed. "Even I can feel that, and, as you know, I am not very subject to psychic impressions. Undoubtedly Eli Dacres made a fatal error in starting his spiritualistic investigations in a house with such a history as this one has. He cannot have understood the danger, or the need of safeguards and precautions."

"What's that?" I cried sharply, my nerves all on edge at the sound I had heard.

A little table in a far corner of the room had begun to creak. Staring through the gloom, I could see that it was tilting. Then, as if released, it came back into position with a sharp click of two legs upon the floor.

It was a most uncanny spectacle, this moving of the piece of furniture without any apparent human intervention.

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"Somebody trying to talk to us," I suggested. "Shall we have a seance, Doctor?"

"No," answered Martinus grimly. "When we're ready to parley with the enemy, we'll let them know. I miss my guess if that's not just a ruse of the Chevalier's to play some trick on us."

Click! went the table leg sharply.

"There, you see," said Martinus, in the same grim way, "he's begun lying already."

A single click, in the code of table-tilting, means of course, "no."

Then an extraordinary thing happened.

The table began to advance slowly along the floor toward us, as if it was being pushed by invisible hands. Halting close beside us, it began to click out a message on the floor. In spite of the Doctor's uncompromising attitude, it was impossible to abstain from mentally spelling out the letters.

"For—God's—sake—help—me!" the message came.

"Who are you?" I don't know whether I actually uttered the words, or merely thought them, but at once the answer came rapping back:

"Eli—Dacres."

"WHERE are you?" That time I spoke—I could not help myself. The Doctor made no comment upon this disobedience of his orders.

"In—the—dark—God—help—me—who—are—you—I—can't—find—my—room."

And suddenly the message broke off, and was succeeded by a still weirder manifestation. The table seemed to be in the possession of two entities, one trying to continue the manifestations, and the other pressing it down forcibly upon the floor. So intense was that invisible struggle that the table groaned and creaked as if it was going to split asunder.

There were all the signs of a scuffle—an invisible scuffle, symbolized only by that intense agitation of the table, which tilted this way and that, sometimes began to tap, but never succeeded in spelling out another intelligible word.

Then of a sudden the struggle ended. The table rested motionless, and I felt as if a presence had passed from the room.

I was shaking. I looked at Martinus. He was sitting back in his chair, smoking his pipe—smoking, with that fiendish battle going on close at hand! His eyes met mine.

"You see, Branscombe—" he said, making a little gesture with his hands.

"Do you think it was Eli Dacres?" I almost shouted at him.

"It may have been," replied the Doctor.

"Then, again, it may equally have been an attempt on the part of the enemy to open communications with us, with a view to trapping us. It's the soundest policy to be very circumspect in such cases. I'm trying to work out a theory. Then we'll make our plan of campaign. But until it's been formulated I don't propose to receive any white flags from the enemy. "I think we'd better rest in turns, or we'll be fit for nothing in the morning. Do you think you can wake me about ten-thirty?"

"Very well," I answered.

"Keep careful guard on yourself, Branscombe. It may be important," he said.

Those last words of his had been rather cryptic. But I had learned not to ask Martinus for explanations, and he was already asleep in the armchair. The little Doctor had the knack of settling to sleep instantaneously. I myself was tired out after our experiences of the journey, but it would not be difficult to keep awake for an hour and a half. Down-stairs I could hear one of the watchers moving about; he had evidently returned from a patrol of the house. I settled myself down in my chair, and picked one of Eli Dacres' books from the shelf, to glance over it.

It was a Cabalistic work, the *Zohar*, a system of theosophy current among the medieval Jews. According to this, there are four successive emanations from the primeval: the Breath, the Breath of Breaths, Fire, and Water.

I had read but a few pages of the translation, however, when I was startled by the uneasy consciousness that some presence was in the room.

Something was watching me, something vile and utterly malevolent, and it was waiting for the opportunity to strike me down.

ON the wall I saw the Hand. It seemed sharply defined against the white background, almost stereoscopically distinct, but this was doubtless an optical illusion caused by the light. In the chair Martinus was sleeping with soft, regular breathing.

And then I heard sounds somewhere in the house.

It was a low, muttering rumble, a never-ceasing argument between two voices—one was snarling, vicious; the other, clear, imperative. They were so low, that they might have been in my own head—and yet they were not in my head. Nor were they in the room.

I stepped to Martinus's side. I stopped,

in the act of waking him. Somehow I fancied that the Doctor had conveyed to me the warning that he was not to be awakened. I listened. How long was it since I had heard Lionel or Roger moving down-stairs? Suddenly, intense fear came upon me. Had "they" got Roger?

I left the room softly. In the hall I could still hear the voices, vague, muttering, the soft sounds coming from anywhere within the house. They might have come from the living-room.

But there was no sound at all in the living-room. In the light of the lamp I saw Lionel Dacres stretched out in a chair, and Roger Chavard upon the lounge. Both were fast asleep, breathing easily and naturally.

THEN I understood why neither of them could give me a very clear account of the phenomena in the house. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Neither man was of the stern stuff of which detectives ought to be made.

I hesitated about waking them. I guesser such an act would rather prejudice our standing in the house. No one would like to be caught in such a foolish position as that. I thought I would go back and ask the Doctor. It would soon be time to wake him. The muttering had ceased; I did not hear it when I entered the hall again.

I made my way up-stairs. The Doctor still lay back in his chair, plunged in profound slumber. I sat down again.

Again I felt the presence in the room. I started. I, too, had been falling into a doze. Four watchers in the house, and all of them asleep! I sat up, squaring my shoulders.

Then I realized that the room was growing dark!

I crossed to the corner where the lamp stood, and looked at it. There was plenty of oil; perhaps the wick was charred. I turned it up, and a flood of brilliant light illuminated the room again.

I went back and sat down. I picked up the *Zohar*, turning the pages idly.... I started up. I had been falling asleep again, and again the light was growing dim.

It must be nearly time to wake the Doctor. I glanced at my watch. I could just see the hands. Ten minutes more—well, I could manage to keep awake ten minutes more. Again I crossed the room and turned up the wick. Once more the light shone out brilliantly.

I sat down in the chair again. How hard it was to struggle against sleep! Five

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minutes more, and I would wake the Doctor. He always liked to be obeyed exactly. He—

I WAS asleep. The light had almost flickered out. I opened my eyes, heavy as if lead weights had been hung on my eyelids. In the last flicker of the expiring lamp, I saw something that stifled the voice in my throat.

Against the window, whether inside or out I do not know, I saw the face of an old black crone, the most envenomed, vicious, utterly bestial face that I have ever seen.

Mammy Nelly! I tried to spring to my feet, but I was held fast in my chair, as if some titan force imprisoned me there.

A shriek that would have aroused the Seven Sleepers, ringing in my ears—another, and another, and another. I was awake now, and on my feet. Something was gripping me by the shoulder. I flung it off in terror—then I heard the Doctor's voice in my ear:

"Branscombe! Branscombe! Why didn't you wake me?"

He was helping me to my feet. How long I had slept I do not know, but the

moon was shining brightly in at the window, and that sense of terror had departed. I knew the evil thing was no longer in the room, though the lamp was out. All the while the shrieking went on and on underneath us, and I heard Roger Chavard's voice, raised in outcry.

I staggered in the Doctor's wake out of the room, and down the stairs. The living-room was dark, but Virginia Dacres was inside, visible as a white-robed form near the window, through which a shaft of moonlight fell. Roger was holding her in his arms as she swooned toward the floor.

Under the window something else was lying.

"A match! A match, Branscombe!" I heard the Doctor's voice.

I found one in my pocket, tried to strike it, but it broke in my fingers. I found another, and applied the flame beneath the glass of the lamp upon the table. Then I turned, to see the Doctor kneeling beside what was upon the floor. Roger Chavard stood near, holding the unconscious form of the girl.

But I had known already what it was that I should see.

"I can never forgive myself," Roger Chavard muttered hoarsely.

It was the body of Lionel Dacres huddled up beneath the window head hung limply backward, the eyes slightly open, the face was waxy as Doctor Martinus, who had been kneeling with his ear against the chest, rose and turned toward me.

"We were too late," he said simply.

Too late, for Lionel Dacres' body was already grown cold.

For the third time the Terror had struck down a victim.

*Three men have already fallen victims to the human fiends who sought to obtain possession of the hidden treasure. Who will be the fourth? In the next instalment Branscombe and Martinus find themselves hard put to combat the machinations of the arch-criminal, Morandi. How can dead men, long buried, leave the grave and walk about in bodily form? Don't miss the next instalment of this story! In January GHOST STORIES, on the newsstands November 23rd.*

## Phantom Perfumes

(Continued from page 26)

possibly be that he, too, might see the strange visions she had seen?

She led him into the hall and through the great rooms, pausing before each window with a thrill of expectancy, but as they contemplated each outlook, no scent of box drifted into them. The long slopes with their elms and maples remained unchanging.

He turned from the window and faced the fireplace, a beautiful Georgian bit of classic architecture. Above it hung a crayon portrait in a bright gold frame, mercifully obscured by faded pink mosquito-netting.

OUR Aunt Cornelia," he said musingly. He stared at the grim dull eyes of the picture. "This is the first time I've ever set foot in your house, Miss Cornelia Sands," he said, "and now I've come, you won't get me out!"

He said it with such concentrated determination that Phoebe started. It was as if the picture was the actual presence of her benefactress. The black eyes stared back from behind their pink veil. Phoebe held her breath, almost fearful of an answer to the uttered defiance.

"Don't," she said, laughing quickly. "You'll make her come alive and I don't want to live with Aunt Cornelia, I tell you flat—and I want the house to learn to like me. Don't call her back!"

"I won't," he promised, solemnly, and turned to Phoebe with sudden smile. "I'm sure I don't want her back." He straightened his wide shoulders and drew himself to his full height. "And now I'll leave you, Miss Sands. I'll see that they connect your phone, and don't forget, I'm right on the other end of it. Good-by." He paused, words seemed to press behind his lips; his strange eyes were full of meaning; he was on the point of saying something—something that intimately concerned her. The look passed from his face. "Good-

by," he repeated, and turned toward the door.

She watched him as he bounded down the path to the waiting car, and waved her hand in farewell. Why had he hesitated? She returned to the living-room window, to stand gazing after the cloud of dust in his wake. The rattle of the car's departure shook the window panes. Then silence. All sound ceased, hushed to the droning of bees. The aromatic breath of sun-warmed box pervaded the room in a sudden hot breath. The highway with its bordering trees was no more. Before her, level with the stone steps of the entrance, stood a box walk to a little wharf. Beyond it, the lily-dotted pond spread its shining length, pale willows shutting off the distant view.

With a stifled cry, she fled across to the window by the fireplace and stared from the casement. Lush grass and apple trees, spikes of larkspur, poppies, and bleeding heart—a box hedge and the corner of a vegetable garden behind a white gate!

Turning her back on the peaceful vision, she flung herself at the windows sheltered by the porch, the windows that ought to look out upon the broad sweep of the valley and the distant cradling hills. But the hills were not there. A sweep of grass-grown lawn through which a brook meandered; a far meadow, its fence-line marked by a row of gnarled cedars. A clapboarded barn, with a huge fanlight on either side of the open hay-loft door. She imagined the stir of cattle and the thump of horses' hoofs. But there was no sound at all now; even the hum of anxious bees was stilled.

Phoebe Sands drew up one of the ancient chairs and sat down. Spellbound, she stared at the landscape; peace, beauty, security—all hers. It, too, was hers, this other vista. It was deeply hers. She wished it would not vanish. It came upon her that she wished it would stay always. She did not want the elms and maples to

return. She wanted the house just like that, cuddled down in homely comfort with bees and flowers and countless apple trees. She wanted the gay little lily pond and the smell of sun-warmed box—oh, always, always the smell of sun-warmed box.

She took no heed of the passing hours as she watched the changing lights and shadows. Time was not. She was at peace.

DAYS passed and Phoebe Sands settled into the routine of her new life. People came to call—the minister and his wife; the president of the bank; prim old ladies and up-to-date young ones whose clothes were cut on the very latest models and whose talk was flavored with a little bit of all the world. Her Aunt Cornelia had had no friends at all, they informed her. Why, indeed, should she? She had despised the community in which she had lived, as cordially as it had despised her.

That there was something strange about the house, Phoebe could not help but gather. Several times her visitors had started to say something and had suddenly become reticent.

The enmity between her Aunt Cornelia and the Wades was touched upon not infrequently. There was no concealment about that and the constant presence of the inherited enemy came in for plenty of amused comment. But she sensed that something was being withheld.

To her inquisitive and kindly neighbors she frankly told her simple story. To them all she was friendly and welcoming. But to none did she speak of the strange duality of the house.

More and more she came to look forward to the coming of the change, whose first intimation was always the scent of box and the humming of bees.

Never did the substitution take place

was out-of-doors. The moment across the threshold she was of actuality. Sometimes she she high with the scent of dew-box in her nostrils and, running to her bedroom window, would sit hours watching the moonlight break in over spangles on the lake and the slow-waving silhouettes of long willow fringes. It was her secret—the mysterious confidence the house gave to her alone. Something to treasure, never to reveal, not even to Clinton Wade who more and more took hold of her thoughts and longings. Dear Enemy! Surely Aunt Cornelia must have relented in her heart of hearts, since she had made no mention of the feud in her will. She must have fancied—Phoebe got no further with her musings. There was a veiled presence in her soul that she would not look at, face to face.

Summer cooled and ripened into Autumn. The maples turned to gold and crimson, and the elms crisped to bronze. She had seen the valley yellow with stubble and the hills aflame with color.

And from the windows opening into the mystic garden she had watched the blue of the larkspurs give place to the brown and yellows and wine-stained ivories of button-chrysanthemums; had seen the apples turn red and russet, and now, mingled with the scent of box, their luscious smell, clean and honest as their ruddy cheeks, made a new fragrance. The fringes of the willows had thinned. The cypress hedges gave glimpses of the green of winter wheat. The pond reflected a bluer sky. The lily-pads were darkening, and the white stars of their blooms no longer dotted the quiet surface of the pool.

AS the evenings grew chill, she no longer sat with Clint on the stone step before the door. Now they drew up to the fire, crackling and leaping behind the massive brass andirons, and chatted idly of each day's happenings. He seemed to belong there by her side, his blue, intent eyes glinting in the warm light, his strong hands quiescent on the polished arms of Aunt Cornelia's best mahogany chair.

She could not prevent the visions that crowded to her heart. He must be there always, close to her. Her husband some day. But never as his wife would she enter that stucco renovated, electric-lighted, up-to-date house of his, never! He belonged here in the old mansion, amid its faded grandeurs. He was part of its dream duality. He must come to her. She could not, would not, go to him. She could not abandon the house, not even for him.

"Nobody asked you to, sir, she said," she quoted to herself, upbraiding her errant fancy. But she knew that the unseen ties that bound them together were as real and as mysterious as the visions of the house. They were not to be explained or argued about; they were.

Autumn burned down to its embers, and the white ash of Winter blew in snow along hill and dale. Sharp, crusty mornings followed crystal nights. Noon days sparkled like diamonds or darkened to gray dusks of bitter sleet. Now the dream pond was black with ice. The willows streamed funereal fringes before the gale. The box hedges were snow-dotted, the apple trees purple-brown with moisture and outlined with ermine. Now the long view of the

valley was stained in mauves and pale yellow, varnished thinly with white. The water courses marked themselves with brittle cleanness. When the vision faded, the elms and rock-maples, divested of their gold and scarlet, held up black lace against the sky. The long lawn was glare-ice over smooth-laid snow, neat as a well-set table-cloth.

Christmas was close at hand. Her first Christmas at home, she thought happily.

The afternoon and evening of Christmas Eve, Clint had promised to spend with her. He'd come early and help her prepare. He had promised her the biggest bunch of mistletoe to be bought, the finest holly wreaths to be found. The house was to have a festival—a wreath in every window with a candle in the middle. Over every mantelpiece were fastened evergreen boughs. Not a nook or corner but had its festive sign.

"The house hasn't had a party for forty years." they decided.

ON Christmas Eve, Phoebe stood before the glowing stove where a cake, a wonderful, pretentious cake, was baking, along with a turkey—a present from the banker's wife—stuffed according to an old and respected recipe. The plum pudding came out of a can, but what of that? The side table was loaded with "fixin's," all the tidbits she could remember as ever being served on this occasion. First they'd have a little run-around of calls in the car, then return for dinner tête-à-tête. How shocked the town would be if it knew, which doubtless it did, after the manner of towns.

But suppose he didn't come, after all? Suppose he should jilt her first party as his father had jilted Aunt Cornelia? The absurd thought flashed through her mind and turned her heart cold just as she was removing the cake from the oven, and, in her panic, she almost dropped it to the floor. Perhaps people inherited traits like that. She set down the pan and stood beside the kitchen table, her face twisted with pain at the sudden realization of what such a disaster would mean to her. Why, she could hate in return, as long and as abominably as Aunt Cornelia! People *did* inherit queer things. But Clint—no, no! Her hands shook as she spread the thick chocolate between the layers. No, not Clint.

At last, all was ready for his coming. She put on her new black-and-white flowered chiffon frock and the long string of pearls.

She heard his car purr to a stop before the horse-block and the quick clip of his steps up the path. Before he could knock, she opened the door and curtsied before him.

He came in, bringing a cold breath of outer air. He closed the door and stood looking at her as he pulled off his heavy gloves with nervous fingers. They moved into the dining room and stood for a moment by an open window, breathing the crisp air—joyous to be alive.

Neither spoke. Suddenly they were in each other's arms, straining close. A tearing, rapturous thrill passed over and engulfed them. They clung together dizzily, caught in the age-old maelstrom.

As if on a rush of sudden wind came the sharp odor of box.

She drew away and looked up, wide-eyed. He was staring out of the window. His face white, his eyes fixed in amazed wonder.

She twisted in his grasp, looking over her

shoulder. Yes, it had come, the mysterious change! There, before them, stretched the path to the lake: the willows waving in the winter wind; the copper light of the setting sun casting royal purple shadows in patterns on the snow.

"Clint," she cried, "don't be frightened. It comes like that often and often. Don't look that way, don't! It's nothing to hurt, really!"

She shook him frantically. He released his hold of her and covered his eyes with both hands. Then he raised his head and looked again.

"Have I gone crazy?" he ejaculated.

She threw herself upon him, panting with eagerness. She was glad, so glad, that he saw too.

"You mustn't mind it. I love it. I wait for it to come!"

"The apple orchard—the brook!" he said in an awed whisper.

Amazement fell upon her. "How did you know?" she stammered. "How could you know? You haven't looked out of the other windows." She felt him quiver, shaken as if by an inner storm.

"And you've seen this all the time?" he asked thickly.

"Ever since I came. I never know when, till I smell the box."

"The box—yes—the old box hedges——" he repeated in a voice so strange that her fears renewed.

"What is it? Oh, what *is* it?" she begged. "What *does* it mean?"

"But it *can't* be!" he cried and lurched to the other side of the room, where he leaned heavily against the sill and looked out. "But it *is*, it *is*!" He drew himself erect suddenly as if galvanized with joyous energy. "Come—come with me—now!"

He threw her coat about her, pulled her fur cap down on her head, jerked open the door, and dragged her to the car. Obediently, she sat down beside him, as with wild eyes and set lips he turned and drove recklessly down the road. For a half mile or more the car flew down the highway. Then he slowed, got out, let down a bar, and turned into a country lane. No macadam here, but frozen brown earth with tangled purple and wine-colored briar burning red in the snow. Another half mile and a pair of high stone gates came into view.

Clinton Wade stopped the car with shrieking brakes and turned to Phoebe. "Will you do as I tell you, Phoebe Sands?"

She nodded.

"Close your eyes, then, and let me lead you. Don't open them till I say when."

HE put his arm about her shoulders and took her right hand in his. She heard their feet crunch on frosted gravel and knew it had been long neglected, for she stumbled over hummocks, and thorns tore at her skirt. They progressed slowly. Now the scent of box was in the keen air, growing stronger, and a faint, ciderish smell as stored apples. Close to her she felt his heart beating hard and fast and heard his breath in a shuddering sigh.

"Open your eyes," he whispered.

She looked up. Green mounds of box surrounded her. A green, box-bordered alley opened before her—a path that ended in a frozen pond. Beyond were willows like whips of gold. And over on the right, rank on rank, marched the battalions of bare apple trees.

"Why, this is the place," she whispered.

"Yes," he said. "See." He turned her about.

There, beyond, was the barn, whose hay-mow door swung creaking in the wind and whose fanlights gaped, glassless.

He eased her to a seat on a stone wall. Then she realized that below, half filled with debris and snow, yawned cellars. There was the place where a chimney had been. She was seated on the foundation of a house. She could trace its form and extent. Here had been a garden. The box still flourished. Yonder, through the cypress, the meadow showed, striped with white in the furrows of brown earth. She did not question it. It was within and without her, beauty, security, peace. Home—the place of the vision.

He was speaking, his lips close to her hair. "Phoebe, dear, I didn't want you to know how your Aunt Cornelia got the house. You'd never be happy in it, if you knew. I made everybody swear not to tell you. But now this has happened, you ought to know what the house is trying to tell you." He was silent a moment as if choosing his next words. "It isn't the home of *your* people, dearest—it *was* the home of *mine*." She gazed at him, astonished. "My father and your Aunt Cornelia were engaged to be married," he explained. "He made over to her his old homestead as his wedding gift. And then—he met my mother. He jilted your Aunt and she never forgave him. Part of her vengeance was that she kept the house. She knew how he loved it, how much it meant to him.

"It cost her half of all she had, to do it, but she had the house put on rollers and moved to the place where it is now. The old Sands mansion had burned down two years before, and so she set it up on the stone foundation that was hers by right. And there they lived, the house and Cornelia. Now, do you understand?"

There was a long silence, then she spoke very softly. "I think she forgave."

HE shook his head. "I won't try to explain it. I've always had the strangest feeling about the old place. Even when I was little, I used to come here and imagine how it used to be; how I could look out from the windows, if I ever got inside, and see all this around it. I wouldn't let myself think of it up there on the hill. I used to try and make myself believe the house was lonely and homesick, and wanted to come back. Just a kid's rebellious fancying, I guess, but I wanted *my* father's house—wanted it always. And then, when I was grown and your Aunt Cornelia died, I couldn't buy it. I tried to, but it was left to you. And since you came—well, I can't think of the house without you in it. I can't think of any house of mine except as yours."

"You felt like that, and yet you told everybody to keep mum about how Aunt Cornelia stole your father's house—because you knew I'd feel I'd have to give it back! You couldn't know *then* that the house wanted us together."

He drew her closer. "It was no fault of yours, no matter who you were. It wouldn't have been fair, that's all."

She turned trusting, adoring eyes to him. "You're so dreadfully good," she whispered, "that if it wouldn't hurt the house's feelings, I wouldn't marry you."

He seemed not to hear her. His eyes were set, his head inclined as if intently listening—the familiar look she had learned to know. She, too, bent her head. Her gaze sought the distance.

"I know," she said softly. "I hear it, too. The House is calling. It says: 'Come here at once, you two; you'll catch your deaths of cold, and besides, my fires are burning low. Come at once and begin to make your plans to move back home.'"

## How I Got Back My Soul

(Continued from page 38)

to steal Corinne from Allan and win her for myself.

I went back to town and took a course in the mechanics of hypnotic control. Oh, yes, it can be done, if you have the talent for it, but I do not advise anyone to do it. It may bring you the shell of what you want, but you'll be no better off than King Midas with his gold. The remedy is far, far worse than the disease.

I WENT back to practice what I had learned, upon Corinne. It was October, and our ranks had thinned. My opportunities for being alone with her were greatly increased, most of all by the fact that Allan had had to go back to New York.

And the end of it was that I achieved almost complete control over Corinne's will. Under my influence she broke her engagement to Allan, and engaged herself to me—*married* me. It was I, who now had the right to take that light body in my arms, kiss those sensitive lips, the very sight of which had power to drive me to madness.

But do not think that for one moment I had possession of my love; the thing I possessed was but a reflection of my own desire. If the lips did not withdraw, they

never gave back. Though I might crush her frail hand in mine, no magnetic current passed from her flesh to mine.

Worse than that, there were times when the soul of Corinne rebelled—when it struggled in the iron clutch of my will. I could feel it shudder like a captured bird. It came to me that if the soul of Corinne could grow very strong, it would escape. I had willed her away from Allan, because she did not really love him. But if she should meet a man she could really love, I would lose her then. For over the thing we call a soul I had no power. My control was only over the lower mind, the will.

And so my own soul sank deeper into the mire. I tried to strangle the feeble fluttering of Corinne's individual soul. I drew her into a veritable whirlpool of the pleasures of the senses—I took her to Monte Carlo, to Paris. I did everything I could to hold her down to the plane of the physical, everything to deaden consciousness of the higher things of the soul.

But again I failed. If my young wife was not strong in the things of the spirit, yet she was, innately, far above the things of sense. Something in her floated above them all—light, fugitive, butterfly-like. I

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could not touch that frail, unreleased child-soul either for evil or for good.

When I realized that, I left her for a time and plunged into the depths of dissipation, wildly seeking relief—oblivion. Then, tortured, shaken, unable to escape from her, I went back—to find her happy like a child in an English country house full of children. She was happy with them, like another child, carefree, sin-free. When she saw me, a shadow came into her lovely eyes.

God, the torture of that moment! Corinne was not glad to see me! I caught sight of my haggard face in a mirror—strained, tormented, and bearing the marks of my recent excesses. No wonder.

Then, to add to my misery, Allan drifted into our circle again. Unreconciled to the loss of the woman he loved, but playing his part bravely, like a strong man and a gentleman.

He did not say a word to Corinne that I might not have heard. I knew that absolutely, yet I could see that Corinne was happier with him, more at ease. And though I knew she did not love him, the sight was agony to me.

One day I heard one of the women talking to her. "You don't deserve a devoted slave like your husband. All the women in the house are crazy about him."

I remember how Corinne looked at her. "I don't think I want a slave," she said.

The other woman—she had tried to draw me into making love more than once—looked at Corinne queerly. "Apparently, you are the only woman in the place who isn't crazy about him," she said. "You treat him like dirt."

A little quiver of hurt passed like a cloud over Corinne's face. "I don't mean to do that," she said. "I'm sorry."

The other woman laughed. I could have wept. I walked away suddenly—afraid that Corinne would discover my presence.

The next day I went back to Paris. I knew then that I had nothing to lose. I began to take drugs. I tried them all. None brought relief, but one induced the final disaster.

Occultists, psychics, understand more about the actual thing that happens under the influence of drugs than the average physician. There is something that can be released under that paralysis of the consciousness... We call it the soul.

Well, then, this is exactly what happened to me one night in a certain palace of sin in Paris. Under the influence of a particularly strong dose of a subtle and little-understood Eastern drug, my soul left my

abused and tortured body. It went out into the invisible—and it did not come back...

I DID not die. In due time my body awoke, excruciatingly fatigued, enervated, unequal for some days to normal effort, but in all respects as fully alive as ever—only, my soul was gone.

Strange indeed is the interrelation of soul and body. The soul is the higher self, yet without it the body can not realize the thrills of sense. It can desire, but it can not experience.

I went back to Corinne, a monster, a body without a soul. I do not think I would have gone back to her, but she became ill and her aunt wired for me. When I went to her room and her eyes met mine—then, indeed, I knew for the first time the horror of all I had lost. She shrank from me—that I had expected—shrank with something like horror, but that was not all.

When I touched her now—I also felt no inward response. I could look upon my beloved with the eyes of love and desire, longing as passionately as ever for the dear response of her love; but when I touched her, it was with no more consciousness than she had felt when she kissed the marble cupid under the demand of my will.

Sometimes the effect of my touch upon her was even more terrible. With all her feeble strength she would draw back from me.

"No, no," she would cry. "Don't touch me—don't come near me—I shall die if you touch me! Oh, go away, go away—leave me—"

I went away. What else was there for me to do? Again I plunged into dissipation. Physically, I was of an iron constitution, or the experience must have wrecked me.

IN dreams from time to time I met my lost soul. When I was in a normal sleep, it would hover over me, ever out of reach, gazing sadly down on me as at a thing related, yet accursed. If I met it in the drugged dreams of oblivion, then it was stern, filled with revulsion at what it saw in me. And sometimes I saw it grinning horribly in derision... But I came to know afterwards that that was not my soul, but evil things, low entities that assumed its likeness to torture me—for my soul, you understand, was beautiful.

One night I lay in natural slumber, in complete exhaustion, but not drug induced.

My soul came nearer to me than I had ever seen it. It looked down on me in a vast pity, god-like.

"Oh, mad, unhappy tenement of flesh," it said, "great is thy sin."

"Oh, my soul?" I cried. "My soul—come back to me and I will sin no more."

"It is for you to open the door," my soul replied. "Until you do—I may not enter."

"What must I do?" I asked.

"Release Corinne," my soul replied. "Set her free from the bondage of your selfish love."

"Give her back to Allan?" I cried. "Never, never!"

Then I saw that my soul was not so close to me. It was escaping into the atmosphere like a smoke. "Until you do," it said, "I cannot come back."

I wakened in an icy chill, like one close to death.

"I will not give her up," I told myself. "She is mine, mine. Have I suffered all this to lose her in the end? It is something, something, at least, that *he* should not possess her."

I walked the streets all day, and for the first time I noticed how men turned their faces away from me in the street, how the little children ran from me. Even the pariahs, who begged from me, did so with averted eyes.

It was because I had become that most dread thing on earth—a human body without a soul.

There was no place for me in the world of men. And if I were to die thus, soulless—where would I go? Would I be snuffed out, extinguished like dead wood in the flame? Or were there other torments, lower and yet lower hells, awaiting the outcast who had committed this last, this unpardonable sin?

There was nothing to do but return. return to the palace of sin where oblivion was to be found.

But on the very threshold of the place something smote me, sharp and clear like a knife thrust, a bugle call.

Had I found oblivion in that place? No, only added torment. It was there I had lost my soul.

There was nothing to do but obey the command of my lost soul. Release Corinne. Give her her freedom to live her life as she would; release her from the bondage of my will.

Alternately rebelling against and succumbing to this command, I took train and steamer to England. I went at once to

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Corinne. I was a dreadful presence—no wonder she shrank from me!—a man without a soul, something lower than the brutes.

"Corinne," I said, "if you were free again, would you marry Allan?"

She looked away from me. "I don't know—perhaps."

Her answer tortured me, but I laid my wound bare to the knife.

"Do you wish you were free from me?"

**S**HE turned her pure eyes upon me. A moment they rested on mine; then she shivered and looked away. "Yes," she said with great vehemence—greater than I had ever heard from her. "Oh, yes, yes... yes."

At that I think I went quite mad. All my good resolutions fled from me. I thrust my face close to hers. "Well, you shall not be free from me," I said; "do you understand? Never, never. I shall stay here now and take my place again as your husband. You belong to me—understand?"

I was as good as my word. But that night Corinne fled from me in screaming hysterics and was ill afterwards for weeks with something like brain fever. For a time, indeed—for she was very frail—her very life hung in balance.

That night while I watched outside her door—for the very sight of me upset her so they had to keep me from her—in a sort of waking dream once again I met my wandering soul, my soul that I had made a homeless thing in empty space.

"Oh, body of sin!" it said to me, "will you not even now set her free?"

"No, no," I cried. "She would go to him. She said it. And I can't bear it—I love her so. I love her so. And if she dies—"

Fear smote me as I looked into the eyes of my soul, for I saw there pity and great sadness.

"You would never see her again."

"Never!" I whispered. "Never any more?"

"Never any more. The years, centuries, eons would roll on—but the distance between you would ever be greater than the space between the worlds."

"Then," I cried out in terror, "then, at least, let me keep what I have here."

But the pity only deepened in the eyes of my soul. "What have you here? Her fear, her hatred of the thing you have become! Why, if you should go near her again—do you not know?—it would drive her soul out from her body. Then, indeed, would she be lost to you forever. Her

soul would go up, up, as a white bird passes from sight overhead in the heavens."

It seemed to me that some great force was tearing me apart, nerve from limb, blood from flesh. Then I looked up and saw that my soul was nearer than it yet had been. It was within reach. It almost touched the sinful body from which I had driven it out.

"Let Corinne go," it said. "Give her back to Allan from whom you stole her, and then—"

"And then?" I panted.

"And then I may return to you," it said.

"I cannot. I cannot," I cried, but before the faint streaks of dawn had come, I had won my battle. I had vowed to release Corinne, to give her back to the man who deserved her as I had never done.

A few minutes later the nurse came out of the room. "Can I see her just a moment?" I begged.

The nurse hesitated. "She is asleep. Maybe you can steal in for just a minute—if you will go right out again."

I went in softly. She lay there, my beloved, very white and still, like a sleeping child. I swear I did not move. I scarcely drew a breath, yet her eyes opened. I caught a glimpse of the nurse's terrified face. I dropped on my knees beside the bed, but without touching her.

"Corinne," I said, "can you hear me?" I saw in her eyes that she did. "Corinne, darling—I will give you up. You can have the divorce you wanted. You can be free to marry Allan, or anyone else. Go to sleep again, dear. It isn't morning yet."

She looked at me a moment, vaguely, like a child, then obediently closed her eyes and slept.

I went to my room and fell into a deep sleep.

When I wakened, I knew that I was no longer that outcast among my kind, a man without a soul.

About the middle of the morning the day-nurse came to me with a message.

"Your wife has asked for you," she said.

I hesitated. "You think it won't upset her to see me?"

**N**OT if she has asked for you. It works that way, you know. They take dislikes to their nearest and dearest in delirium."

Slowly I went into my darling's room, my heart in my throat. I do not know whether it was pain or happiness when I saw that she smiled.

"Hugh," she whispered, "it's so long since

I've seen you. Have I been ill very long?"

"Quite long," I commanded my voice to answer. Had she forgotten my visits, my words of the night? Then I saw that her dear hand was reaching out to me. My heart stood still as I took it in mine. I said what I did not mean to say.

"Corinne, dearest, I meant what I said about Allan. I sha'n't go back on it, you know."

"About Allan?" she looked faintly surprised, then shook her head. "I don't remember."

I sat watching her, fearing almost to breathe. She looked very frail. What if anything should happen to her? What if I had killed her? Dear God, what if Corinne should die!

Her dear voice recalled me.

"When are we going home, Hugh? I want to go home."

I looked at her stupidly. "Home? To America, you mean?"

She looked faintly surprised. "To America, of course. That is home, isn't it?"

I stared at her like a dumb creature. "With me, you mean? You want to go home with me?"

Her surprise increased. "With you—of course. Haven't I married you?"

The world swam around me. For a moment I wondered if this, too, was a dream. "But Corinne, dear, you needn't, you know. I meant what I said."

Corinne did not seem to understand. She went on as if I had not spoken.

"I've been a funny kind of a wife, I guess. I know sometimes I haven't even wanted you to come near me. Often I've thought there must be something about me—different from other women. There have been times when I have looked at you—and have seen other women crazy about you, running after you, and you never having eyes for anyone but me—and yet I couldn't seem to care. They used to scold me about it. But somehow I couldn't care. I used to wish you would go with other women and leave me alone. I wanted—oh, terribly—to be free from you. But now, perhaps, it's going to be different. I don't seem to feel that way any more, darling."

**C**ORINNE—how long—oh, I mustn't ask you. You've been so ill. You mustn't talk."

Corinne looked at me vaguely—like a child. "I don't know. You seem different, somehow."

Then her eyes closed, and very soon she was asleep holding my hand.

## Invisible Knock-Outs

(Continued from page 14)

regarding that knock-out blow in either hand which was in evidence only during actual combat. I was to learn that Roberts himself was more mystified than any of us.

The many victories of Roberts made it impossible for the Kid to avoid a match. Reluctantly, he signed. And his reluctance was justified. He went the way of the others. The invisible knock-out blow got him in the first round.

With the championship under his belt, Roberts wanted to quit. In fact, for months Terry couldn't get him even to talk about a fight. He seemed to have lost

all his confidence. He became moody. The men whom he had knocked out with ease before, now seemed to inspire him with fear. He was in favor of retiring without defending his title.

**T**ERRY argued, pleaded, and cajoled—but all to no avail. He couldn't drag Roberts into the ring. Then Terry told him that it was all right for him to throw away a fortune of his own, but he had no right to throw away a fortune that belonged to him (Terry), as the manager of the man he had made champion. This statement

got under Roberts' skin. He agreed to defend his title, but insisted that Terry sign an easy-market. Mike Mahoney had been chosen, and certainly Terry could not have found an easier prospect if he had hunted through fistiana with a fine comb.

A sudden hush in the chatter of the crowd ended my reveries. The gong sounded. The two fighters rushed from their corners and met in the center of the ring. The battle was on.

We in the press-box sat on the edges of our seats, watching the champion with hawk-like eyes. We expected the bout to

end within the three-minute limit of that first round, and we wanted to see that knock-out as it was put over. The columns we would write about it! The phantom punch with a carload of bricks behind it! The gentle tap which carried a ton of opium! The sweet caress leading to slumberland! The quicker-than-the-eye wallop! Oh, the smiles and metaphors we sports-writers had racked out of our brains in the endeavor to describe that mysterious blow.

Roberts danced about the ring. His characteristic smile was missing. He didn't seem anxious to stand up and fight, but kept backing away from the bull-rushing Mike. The bell rang. The first round was ended. Not a real blow had been landed by either fighter. The crowd stirred uneasily. They didn't know what to make of it. A man had stayed in the ring more than a single round with the great Roberts.

The chap alongside me remarked: "Well, I guess he's decided to give the crowd a run for its money. You can't blame him. He's got to consider his public. You can't expect them to keep paying big dough for only a couple of minutes of action."

This was an entirely incorrect estimate of the fight-going public. They liked Roberts because he was a quick killer. The thrill of his one-round knock-outs meant more to them than a hundred rounds of ineffective walloping. They instinctively admired a man who did the job before him with ease and dispatch. The task of a boxer was to put his opponent out for the count of ten. Roberts had done this repeatedly in a single blow and with no more fuss than if he were patting a child's cheek. The nonchalance with which he accomplished a task that made other men puff, snort, and struggle was the secret of his popularity. The crowd now was uneasy. They felt something was wrong with their idol. Except for their nervous stirring they were very quiet during the minute rest period.

THE gong again clanged. The second round was much like the first except that Mike, gaining confidence, pressed closer and closer and managed to land a few nasty body blows. Once he rushed Roberts to the ropes with such ferocity that he almost drove him through them and into the press-box.

The third, fourth, and fifth rounds were repetitions of the second, except that, as the fight progressed, Mahoney's blows began to tell on Roberts. He found it more and more difficult to keep out of range. As Roberts tired, Mike began to hit higher. He split the champion's lip, brought blood from his nose, and closed one eye. When the bell rang at the end of the fifth round, it was a battered and exhausted Roberts that staggered to his corner.

The crowd was now in a frenzy. The unexpected was happening. The drama of the moment was intense. A champion was passing. In the exalted excitement of this realization, the spectators temporarily forgot the tens of thousands of dollars they had bet at great odds on Roberts.

The sixth round saw Roberts hanging on dazedly. He could not deliver an effective blow and kept clinching in a vain hope of avoiding punishment. Mike slashed and battered away, but was unable to put over a knock-out although he had the Champion practically helpless. Finally, the referee ended the bout on his own initiative. Just

as the round was closing, he stepped between the two fighters, and raising Mike's gloved hand high above his head, proclaimed him the winner and new champion.

Roberts sank to the canvas and sat there until his seconds picked him up and carried him to his dressing-room. The spectators gave the new champion a hearty cheer, but they seemed to soon forget him. As they slowly filed out of the giant arena, they all asked each other the same questions. What was the matter with Roberts? What had happened to his famous knock-out?

The usual charges of a frame-up, which always follow the defeat of a heavy betting favorite, were made. In this case there seemed to be some justification in the fact that Hal Williams, a close friend of Roberts, and a wealthy sportsman and hotel owner, who had backed him in all his previous bouts, had won a fortune in betting on Mahoney.

The day following the fiasco which had been a championship fight, I got in touch with Roberts by phone. He asked me to come immediately and promised to tell me the real cause of his defeat. To say that I was excited, is putting it mildly. I almost broke my neck in my hurry to get to his hotel. I saw a great scoop—the most sensational boxing story of the year. And the story Roberts told me was far beyond my expectations. It was not merely sensational, but astounding, amazing, unbelievable! Unfortunately, I could not publish it. I was sworn to secrecy. I set it down now for the first time. And I am only able to do so even at this late date because all through this tale I have used other names than the real ones.

Roberts sat on a sofa in his hotel room. His back was well cushioned with pillows. He held an ice-pack to his swollen eye, and his split lip was pulled together with adhesive tape. At one side of him sat Dick Terry, his little manager, who, before he had taken on Roberts, had managed the great Lightning Bob Harrigan; and on the other side of the ex-champion stood Hal Williams, the man whose betting activities had thrown a cloud of disrepute over the whole Roberts camp. They were a somber trio. I have never seen a more downcast lot of faces.

ROBERTS motioned me to a chair and immediately launched into his story. He spoke slowly but with suppressed excitement. His split lip hurt him, and he had to make an effort to keep the words from coming too fast.

"Bill," he began, "you've always been square with me, and I don't want you to think there's anything in this talk of a frame-up. I lost to Mike Mahoney because I didn't have a knock-out wallop, and what's more, I never had one."

I started to interrupt. The man was crazy. Hadn't he put away ten of the best fighters in the country? Roberts held up his hand in a gesture commanding silence.

He went on: "That may sound nutty to you, I'll admit. But it's the truth. Until my bout last night, the knock-out wallop was there in the ring with me, but it didn't belong to me."

I looked at him inquisitively. Was he kidding me? No! There wasn't the slightest sign of a smile on Roberts', Terry's, or Williams' lips. They were all deadly serious.

"I don't get you," was all I could say.

"You will in a minute," Roberts came back. "Just let me explain."

"Go on! I won't interrupt!" I encouraged.

"Good! This is the whole story from the beginning." And then Roberts told his strange tale. "You remember the night I knocked out Kid Scanlon at that vaudeville house. Well, I was the most surprised man in the world. I hardly touched him on the jaw, and he fell as if a sledge-hammer had hit him. Honest, I thought someone had struck him with a bat or a wrench from behind.

"I was mystified by the whole business until Terry here, who had just had hard luck in losing Lightning Bob Harrigan after he had nursed him right up to a championship bout, came along and wanted me to fight for him. I told him I thought my putting Scanlon to sleep was an accident. But he argued that I might be one of those boxers that carried a powerful wallop without knowing it. He tried me out against some of his other boys. I didn't have anything but a lot of speed in running away from punches. I decided my future was the law and not the prize-ring. But Terry wouldn't give up. He argued that my terrible wallop might only show in a real battle. He made me promise to fight at least one fight.

YOU know what happened. My opponent was knocked out in the first round. None of you boys at the ringside saw the punch that did it, so you doped out that line about the invisible knock-out. You were nearer the truth than you imagined. I myself didn't see the punch that dropped that boy to the canvas. He was down on his back, dead to the world, before I'd done anything more than caress his ear.

"Terry here then began signing up stronger and stronger opposition, and they all went the same way—the phantom knock-out got them. All I had to do was step in the ring spar a little, and the first time my glove, touched an opponent's face, he went down and never got up.

"I told Terry there was something queer about it all, but he argued that I was too modest and didn't appreciate the power behind my little love-taps.

"Terry finally forced the champion, Kid Scanlon, into a match. My winning over the Kid meant a lot to Terry, because the Kid, as you know, beat Lightning Bob Harrigan, Terry's boy. In fact, Lightning Bob was so badly beaten by the Kid that he died from the effects of that battle. At least, everybody thought that's why he died. And we did, too, but we don't any more."

Roberts paused here and looked for confirmation at Terry and Williams. They both nodded.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I'm coming to that," Roberts said. "But I don't want to get ahead of the story. I knocked out the Kid." He corrected himself. "Rather, the phantom knock-out got the Kid in the first round. I was the champion. Terry had his revenge. We were sitting on top of the world.

"Then it happened!" He stopped to moisten his dry lips with his tongue.

"What happened?" The question escaped me.

"The thing that explains everything." Roberts again looked at Terry and Wil-

liams, who again nodded in agreement. By this time I was ready to shout from impatience, but I restrained myself and hung on Roberts' every word.

"Williams, here, you know, owns this hotel. He gets all sorts of queer people in it. One evening about a week after I became champion, I was staying here. Williams came in to see me and asked if I'd like a little excitement. I was game, and so he told me one of his guests was supposed to be a great medium and that we might arrange to have him give us a few messages.

"Now, I never believed in this spiritualism stuff. But I'd never seen a medium in action, and so I went down to this fellow's room, anxious to see how the bunk was put over.

"He was a big, heavy-featured chap—hardly the sort of man you'd think played around with spirits. We sat down and chatted with him a little. Suddenly his head falls over on his shoulder, his muscles begin to quiver, and he starts to groan.

"Then the fellow began talking to me, and I swear to you his voice sounded like that of a different man. 'Ralph Roberts,' the medium said, 'you will never win another fight. This is Lightning Bob Harrigan, who is talking to you. I advise you to retire from the prize-ring.'

"I turned and looked at Williams. He asked right back. 'Why?' The medium immediately answered: 'Because I will no longer be at your side in the ring.'

"'Explain yourself! What do you mean?' Williams demanded. The medium replied: 'The night I fought Kid Scanlon for the championship, I was doped. As I pushed my way through the crowd at the ringside to get into the ring, someone jabbed a hypodermic into my thigh. I remembered the needle prick after the bout, but in my excitement I paid no attention to it at the moment. The drug took effect on me almost immediately. I was already groggy in the first round and unable to defend myself effectively. But in spite of everything Kid Scanlon couldn't knock me out. For four rounds he battered me unmercifully, and then I crumpled. The combined effect of the drug and the beating was too much for my heart. It gave way. I passed from among you to the land of the spirits, vowing to have my revenge on Kid Scanlon.

"The first man to face Kid Scanlon after he defeated me was you, Ralph Roberts. And as you stepped out on that vaudeville stage, I was at your side. You could not see me, but I was there. And as

you tapped Kid Scanlon gently with your glove, I delivered my famous knock-out blow—the blow that would have won me the championship and enabled me to keep it for many years, if it hadn't been for Kid Scanlon's foul play, for I now know—spirits have many ways of learning things—that it was a hiring of the Kid who jabbed that hypodermic into my thigh.'

"The medium paused. I sat trembling, the sweat breaking out all over me.

"When Dick Terry took you under his management, I decided to see you through to the championship. Your victories would enable me to pay back Terry some of his loss from my untimely death and also would revenge me further on the Kid. In every fight, I stood by your side. And I coordinated my knock-out blows with your love-taps, as you call them. But now that you have defeated the Kid and won the championship, I shall retire from the world of men and devote myself entirely to my new duties in the spirit world. Good-by and good luck!

"The medium's head fell forward on his chest, his muscles quivered, and he let forth great groans. After a few moments he straightened up and sat back in his chair as if exhausted. Williams and I exchanged looks. The medium asked us if we had received a good message. Williams said it was very interesting. I said nothing. I was too flabbergasted. We thanked him and left.

"My first reaction was to consider it all hokum—a clever invention of the medium to impress me, to undermine my confidence. But the more I thought of it, the more I believed it genuine. It certainly explained the unexpected defeat of Lightning Bob Harrigan by Kid Scanlon—a defeat that absolutely mystified you sports-writers. And it explained the invisible knock-out, which had always been a mystery to everyone, including myself. I finally decided to follow the advice of Bob Harrigan's spirit and quit the prize-ring, but Terry here argued me into the bout with Mike Mahoney. You saw what happened. Williams here, who believed in the spirit's story, bet on Mike and cleaned up."

"Now, we realize," he continued, "that if we told this story to the public, we'd get the merry ha-ha! But it's the truth, nevertheless, and we wanted you to know it."

Since Ralph Roberts told me his story, I have thought it over many times. More than once I have concluded that it was a great hoax. But today I see no other explanation for Roberts' strange career.

## A Haunted Half-Dollar

(Continued from page 35)

wasn't the place you were searching for."

"Hm. Good idea. I'll get over there first thing in the morning." Even more downcast than before, Carter got into bed. As he was about to extinguish the light, he exclaimed:

"But, John, that's why I got my notice, lost my trunk! My coin was gone!"

Dunlevy raised his dark eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders as he lay in bed.

"Give her another half-dollar in exchange."

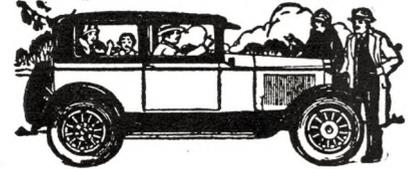
Immediately after breakfast the next morning, after Carter had passed an ex-

remely restless night, he and Dunlevy left the hotel and walked rapidly over to the church. Carter had seen the yellow fingers and the grinning face of the old woman in his dreams. He had visioned her gloating over the possession of his lucky fifty-cent piece—and over the possession of his yet-to-be-found treasure.

When they came in sight of the ivy-covered church, its walls did not suggest the gloom of the night before in the murky twilight. This morning a clear sun shone, and birds chirped loudly to herald the beautiful day. Carter hurried his pace, and Dun-

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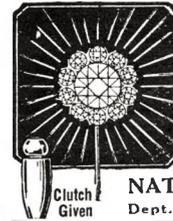
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levy kept up with him with some trouble.

In two steps Carter had ascended the rickety steps to the porch, and in another he stood within the now fairly-light interior, looking about eagerly. He spied a man, evidently the janitor, sweeping between the last two rows of pews. Dunlevy behind him. Carter advanced to the man, who had looked up in surprise at their hasty entrance.

"I say," Carter accosted him, "I want to see that old woman who keeps the crypt down below."

"Who?"

Carter repeated his question impatiently.

The man stared at him and shook his head in rumination. "There ain't no old woman in this church."

"Oh, come now. I saw her here last night. I talked to her for more than half an hour."

The man shook his head, rubbed his chin, and shifted from one foot to the other. "There ain't been no woman here that I know of."

"Can we see the pastor?" Dunlevy's calm voice asked from behind Carter's exasperated back.

At that moment the vestry door at one side opened and a man with white hair, wearing a long black coat, appeared in the opening. "What is it?" he called in a quiet voice.

With a smothered exclamation of relief Carter strode over to him.

"You are the pastor, I presume? My name is Carter, with the *Spun Gold* company at the Town Hall. This is Mr. Dunlevy."

The kindly old man inclined his head and waited for Carter to make known what it was he wanted. Without hesitation Carter plunged on:

"I came here late yesterday evening, and an old woman showed me about downstairs. I gave her a coin by mistake which I would like to get back from her. Do you know where she is now?"

The pastor shook his head. "Old woman? There is no old woman connected with this church, sir."

Carter began again to become exasperated. "But I talked with her last night for nearly an hour. I gave her my coin."

"Mr. Carter, there has been no woman caretaker in this church in the ten years I have been here. There is no such old woman in the parish—"

Carter explained again. "I came in to ask if a Timothy Carter were buried here." The pastor started. "I'm convinced now he isn't, but I did talk to an old woman for some time in the crypt."

"The crypt?" The pastor repeated in surprise. Then he called to the janitor. "Oh, Lem, light the lantern and bring it, will you please?"

In a moment they were descending the stone stairs which Carter had so fearfully crept down a few hours before. The lantern threw a strong light on the moldy walls, and on the flag steps. Arrived at the bottom, the pastor turned and said:

"NOW, Mr. Carter." He and Dunlevy watched with keen interest as Carter led the way around the corner. The pastor and Dunlevy came behind him, and the light of the lantern fell on the wall. Suddenly Carter cried out.

"What's the matter?" the other two men exclaimed together.

"It's gone!"

"Listen, Lon—" Dunlevy remonstrated.

With horrified eyes Carter stared at the wall before them. The lantern light fell clearly ahead, but where there had been a large oaken door the night before, there was now only a solid brick wall.

"Where's the door?" He turned to glare wildly at the two men, who in turn regarded him with astonishment.

"Mr. Carter, I'm afraid—" The pastor threw the light all about, but it fell on solid walls.

"But I tell you I went through a big oak door here last night. The old woman led me through. She showed me heaps of bones. Good heavens, I couldn't have dreamed it!"

He beat his fists on the rough brick before him, but no door appeared. The perspiration ran freely down his face. "I gave her my lucky coin! Where's the crypt? Where's the door?"

Only Dunlevy retained his presence of mind. He grasped Carter firmly by the arm and began leading him to the staircase. Carter continued to talk wildly.

"I went right through that big door. She opened it wide, right there! She had a candle! She showed me skulls, and there were heaps of bones—and caskets. What's happened? Where did it all go?"

HE stared about him, seeking an explanation. He stumbled up the stone steps. Dunlevy practically dragging him out into the morning sunlight. When the three men stood out before the church, Carter's face held a drawn look. The chain of events—or imaginings—had shaken him more than Dunlevy guessed, for the lucky coin which others scorned was Carter's dearest possession. He had never ceased to believe in its powers for good fortune, or forgotten his uncle's significant words.

The kindly old pastor regarded Carter and Dunlevy with a perplexed frown. "I don't know just what to say, Mr. Carter. You say that—"

Carter broke forth again: "I couldn't have imagined it all. I can even remember perfectly what I said!"

"In my ten years here there has never been any old woman in the church," began the pastor, but then his face cleared. "There's a member of the parish living over here who knows the history of this little church. Maybe he can throw some light on the mystery."

With rapid strides the three men, led by the pastor, crossed the road, and came to a little cottage set a few feet back from the highway. They passed through a neatly kept garden, and knocked on the door. A meager, white-haired man came to answer their summons, and greeted the pastor with pleasure.

Without wasting any time, the pastor plunged at once into what had brought them to Satterlee, the old man who knew many things about the church.

Carter watched Satterlee anxiously during the pastor's recital, and was stirred to see that, as the particulars were placed before the old man, his eyes began to shine with excitement and that he moved his feet nervously.

"What sort of old woman? What did she tell you?" Satterlee asked, turning eagerly to Carter, who replied as he had previously: that she had shown him the bones of a beautiful girl, of a certain Captain

dead ten years or more, and that the woman herself had appeared to be demented. Then he added that he had entered the church to seek Timothy Carter's place of burial and that he had given his lucky coin to the woman.

Carter was amazed to see Satterlee smile. He interrupted: "You're right; there's never been a woman with the church. But Mr. Carter isn't so crazy as you think. Shall we go back to the church?"

Accordingly the four almost ran back the few steps, Carter becoming more and more anxious, Dunlevy smiling in disbelief, and the pastor guardedly courteous. Down the stone steps they went, lighted this time by another lantern in addition to the first.

With quick steps old Satterlee ran to the wall indicated by Carter and examined it closely. Then, his eyes glowing with inner excitement, he turned triumphantly on the three men behind him. "We'll see!"

Carter stepped forward. "What is it, Mr. Satterlee? Have you found out anything?"

Satterlee started laughing quietly, and directed them: "Go and get some picks and shovels, and a couple of crowbars."

"Now, Mr. Satterlee," the pastor remonstrated, but the older man interrupted him.

"Do you want to get to the bottom of this?" he demanded.

The pastor did not reply as he saw Carter dash up the stone steps followed by Dunlevy, and return a few moments later with the janitor, all three laden with the implements Satterlee had designated.

"Now," said Satterlee, "listen to me. Behind this wall is the crypt in which Mr. Carter saw the bones last night. It has been there for nearly one hundred and fifty years!" His listeners gasped, while Carter felt again that cold shiver he had experienced when the old woman had grinned at him. Satterlee continued: "During the Revolutionary War, when this part of the country was being ravaged by bands of British troops, guerrillas, and bandits, the people of Valley Hill decided to protect their dead, somehow. Accordingly, they dug this crypt, placed the remains in it, and sealed it all behind this wall, which seems to correspond with the outside of the church above, but does not." Here he paused impressively, while the men about him hardly breathed. "It has been opened only once since then, and that was years ago, but—"

Not a sound broke the stillness of the group when Satterlee ended his amazing story. Carter, rigid, could do no more than stare at this man who had conjured up such an explanation of his adventure with the old woman the night before. He shuddered, and glanced about him apprehensively, when Satterlee's voice began again:

"Now, that crypt is behind this false wall. You have picks and crowbars. Break it down!"

"I forbid it!" They turned, startled, to look at the pastor, who regarded them sternly. "This is a good explanation, no doubt, of something occurring long ago. If true, let us not disturb the peace of their tomb."

Satterlee watched quietly, for Carter had turned to plead with the pastor. "Nothing will be disturbed. You can't let me go away from here without any attempt to find out why all this happens. I demand

that coin!" It's my lucky pocket piece.

For a silent second the pastor looked into Carter's haggard face, watched his twitching hands. Then he bowed his head in assent.

With a jump Carter possessed himself of a pick, and delivered a smashing, resounding blow on the brick wall before them. It gave forth a faintly hollow sound. Carter struck again, as did Satterlee and Dunlevy. Within a few moments they had laid bare floor beneath the crumbling bricks and mortar—the very door through which Carter had passed not twenty hours before! Perspiration streaming down their faces, they dropped their implements and sprang to the massive iron handle which protruded from one side. But the door stuck.

Carter then grasped one of the crow-bars, and inserted it to use as a lever. After he had tugged, wrenched, and pounded, the door swung protestingly open. They staggered back as a gust of foul air swept upon them. With ill-restrained impatience they waited a moment, Carter peering into the pitchy blackness of the interior now revealed to them. Finally, with a muttered

ejaculation, he snatched one of the lanterns from the floor and leaped into the crypt. A cry sounded from his throat. The other three men rushed in and beheld Carter staring at the floor, while he held the lantern high above his head.

In awesome silence, they, too, stared about them. The crypt was filled, as Carter had said, with bones of all kinds and descriptions.

"See," he pointed with a shaking fore-finger—"those skulls!"

With the two lanterns they saw well enough that the crypt was as Carter and Satterlee had described it. They looked about them, absorbed, forgetting for the moment their mission there—to explain the disappearance of the lucky coin. Suddenly Carter dropped on one knee with a hoarse cry, and held the lantern close to the ground as his fingers fumbled among a heap of bones. Something gleamed in his hand. It was a fifty-cent piece. Carter stood up and gazed wildly at the three men. They looked at what he held in his hand; their faces became stilled in astonishment.

With joy, and some horror in his voice, Carter cried out:

"My lucky coin!"

Then on his shoulder he felt the hand of the old Satterlee, and his voice saying: "I can tell you now, Mr. Carter, that we buried your Uncle Timothy here one night, unknown to anyone, in accordance with his last wish. We were to identify you by the lucky coin and then reveal the secret to you."

CARTER turned his astonished eyes to the pleased face of the pastor, who stood in one corner by a carved New England chest, which was covered with dust and leaning awry against the dank wall. With faltering steps Carter approached, and on the lid of the chest, in half-obliterated letters on a metal plate, he read:

*From Timothy Carter, To His Nephew, Lon Carter.*

Many years before, old Timothy had said, "Guard this lucky coin with care, for some day it will be the means of your fortune!" And the old man had been right!

## True Ghost Experiences

(Continued from page 58)

Then I saw it! I saw her, my Alicia, my wife! She was lying in a crumpled, mangled heap in the road, and the blood was saturating her lacy negligée. But her beautiful face was unharmed. As I bent over her in agonized supplication, her eyelids fluttered open for an instant and she smiled at me. Then with a soft sigh, a gently expiring breath, her lovely face set in death's last calmness.

### *The Meeting Place*

"I LOST a baby two years old a year ago and sometimes I can feel his little body in my arms at night—and I know that he is with me."

Mrs. F. E. S.

Hutchinson, Kansas.

"Six months after my great-aunt's death I was sleeping in my room. About midnight I was awakened by one of the windows rattling. I felt the presence of someone. The window rattled again; then there was a gust of wind. The curtain blew up to the ceiling.

"The next instant I saw my great-aunt walking toward my bed. I sat up, pinched myself, rubbed my eyes. Good Lord! I was not dreaming. She was now at my bedside. She was smiling; yet she said not a word. I tried to holler, but I couldn't. I dropped on my back and pulled the covers over my head. I don't know how long she stayed there, for I didn't look up once. That was seven years ago, and I have not slept there since. . . .

"Just last night my sister slept in that room. About an hour after she went to bed, she got up and went downstairs, as she exclaimed, 'That room is certainly haunted.'"

W. B.

Hastings, Nebraska.

"Not long ago I was looking at my face in the mirror. All of a sudden there came a woman's face in place of my own. I thought swiftly, 'Where have I seen her before?' Then recognition came. It was the face of a woman who was once a dear friend of mine but who is now dead.

"What caused me to see her? Was it, perhaps, that her husband was thinking of me—or did the dead come to me of her own free will? Do you believe in thought waves? The way our thoughts of the dead take form causes me to think we can reach the dead through mind telegraphy."

V. A.

San Antonio, Texas.

"Our family lived in an apartment where folding doors opened into an unoccupied bedroom. At the top of the door was a latch with a chain. One night Brother and I were lying in bed, talking. Suddenly this door began to pop and crack as if someone were pounding it with an ax. The chain began to rattle as if someone were pulling it up and down. I was so frightened that I crept under the cover, but my brother got up to investigate. The noise continued until he turned on the light. Then it quit as suddenly as it started.

"We called neighbors in, and then turned down the light, hoping it would happen again. Needless to say, it didn't. Our father was told, and he nailed the chain down. He worked at night and slept during the day. Many times he could hear the chain trying to move.

"We afterward found out that our landlord's son committed suicide behind this door."

P. B.

Anderson, Indiana.

"Crystal-gazing, ouija-board practices, *et cetera*, should be discouraged. They are negative in their nature and are apt to draw very undesirable entities from the invisible planes."

F. D.

Pasadena, California.

"My brother and I had gone to the next farmhouse for milk. My father was going hunting that night, and so we had to come home alone.

"My brother was pulling me in a cart when all of a sudden something ran in front of us. It walked like a bear on its hind legs and resembled a deer in form. All the way home it ran from one side of the road to the other, shaking the brushes. We ran home as fast as we could, but when we got near the house, it disappeared.

"When my father came home, he told my mother about the same thing—only it ran on four legs up the road past him. His dog—a good hunting dog—just lay down in the road and cried when told to go after it.

"The next morning my father dropped in the field. When he came to, his brother came to the field with a telegram.

"Another brother, a brakeman, had been killed on the railroad."

H. D. L.

Watertown, New York.

"I am the father of a little girl who died on the 8th of May, 1917, and was buried on the 10th of May. On the second Sunday in August that year—it was about ten o'clock in the morning and the sun was shining very bright—I took a snap-shot of her mother and two sisters and Grandma on the porch. We are not spiritualists, but we were so

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positive that the little one would be in the picture that we placed a small stool beside her mother. We did not have any picture whatever of the little girl.

"To our great satisfaction, when the film was developed, her face—a perfect likeness—appeared in the window, there being a green shade drawn all the way down at the time the picture was taken. We will cheerfully swear to these facts before a notary public."

J. W. M.

Charlotte, North Carolina.

"One night, during my college year, 1922, I retired early. This was my usual custom when I didn't feel in a mood to sit up and study. My roommate was a chiropractor. He didn't take to my personality, nor I to his . . .

"He arrived late that night and awakened me from a sound sleep. To say the least, I was sore. He grunted something about a dance as he crawled into bed.

"I was soon asleep again, however, and didn't awaken again until about two o'clock in the morning. The moonlight was streaming into the windows and so lighted the room that the print of a newspaper could easily have been read. My roommate was dead to the world and sounded like a buzz-saw.

"I imagine I was awake about five minutes. You know, five minutes is a long time when you have nothing but time on your hands. Gradually—I say 'gradually' because there was nothing sudden about it—I felt a pressure on my chest and abdomen. It didn't frighten me any, but served to make me more acutely awake. Then it began to have a smothering effect.

"I recollect a mixed feeling of anger and curiosity coming over me. With that I gave a violent wrench—more of a determined willing off of something. It's difficult to describe exactly my mental state. Perhaps, I was in a temporary 'cracked' state.

"But the fact that I was flat on my back served to make me observe the slightly hair-raising part of it. About three feet above me, slightly to the left, I saw a face suspended in the air. It was enclosed and draped about with what resembled cobwebs—not disconnected, but massed together. There was a high-pitched purring sound such as a mosquito makes when he gets close to your ear on a hot night. The face resembled a gorilla or some sort of ape. It impressed me as being black.

"Well, it hovered over me for a while and then rapidly traveled toward the left corner of the room and seemed to disappear at the junction of the wall and ceiling. The purring sound grew gradually fainter.

"I got up and turned on the light. Relating the experience to my father-headed chiropractor bedfellow, the only satisfaction he offered me was that I must have had a shot of 'corn' in me."

Dr. E. L. W.

Madison, Missouri.

"In 1920 I heard a bell. We lived in the country and at first I thought it must be a strange cow, for I knew all the bells near. I asked my mother if she

heard a strange bell, and she said, no. I was so uneasy. I was afraid my father or mother was going to die. I put my hands over my ears, but could still hear it. I heard it for about a week, and we received word that my mother's father was dead.

"I heard bells again in 1926 before my niece's baby died."

Mrs. W. T. S.

Madill, Oklahoma

"Some time before my husband passed on, we were invited to a seance. We accepted. It was held in the home of a medium who was a total stranger to us.

"The large living-room was filled with people sitting in a semi-circle about three sides of it. The fourth side held the cabinet made of draperies. The place was dimly lighted, but sufficiently so to see each person and object in the room.

"All in the place had been invited to inspect the cabinet. After doing so, we went back to our seats again, and all were asked to join hands.

"In a few moments the curtains parted and a nebulous shape appeared. The medium told us to whom it belonged. After several such appearances, the curtains were held back by a child, very much more distinct than any of the others. The medium said that it belonged to me.

"She is between eight and nine," she said, 'but she passed on when a mere infant. Her name begins with an 'O.' I can't quite get the name.'

"I was too startled to speak, for all she said was true.

"Our little daughter passed away when only a few months old, and would have been just the age of the little girl between the curtains. Her name was Orrilla, after my mother."

F. W. T.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"On the night of December 28 I dreamed that Tom—a distant relative who died over a year and a half ago—came back and had died all over again. By that, I mean that we all went through the ordeal again, and throughout the dream a brown dog appeared to howl.

"The next morning at the breakfast table I related my dream to my mother and wife, who passed it off as a nightmare. But I told my wife if she received any bad news from up-state, not to be put out about it. I knew that her grandmother had been ill over a year. But they insisted that I must have heard some dog in the neighborhood howl, without waking up, and that this brought back memories of Tom.

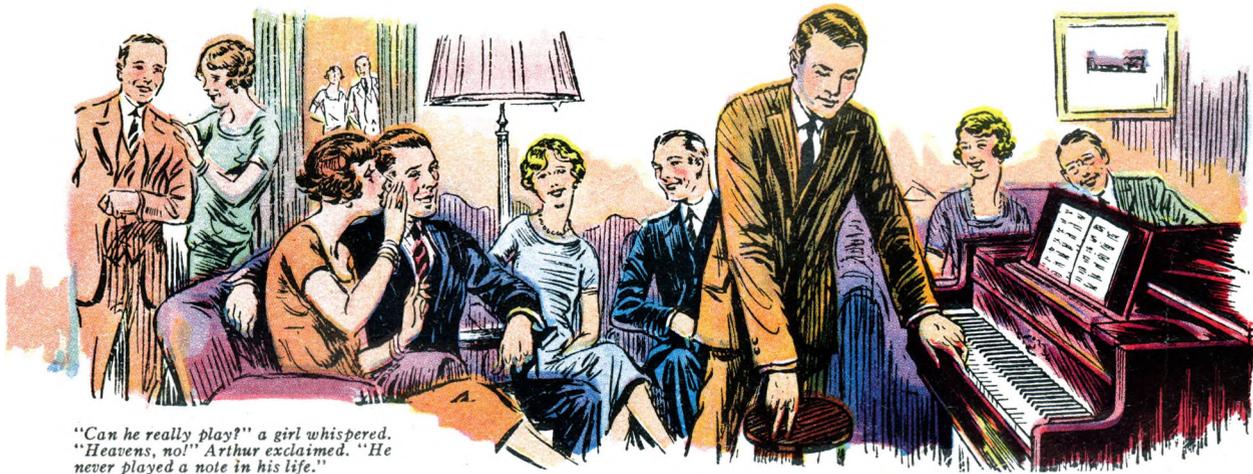
"But in the afternoon I went down to put some coal on the fire and I found my dog, a brown dog, lying dead on the cellar floor.

"Now it happens that Tom and my dog were great pals in life—and I know that when my dog's time was up, Tom simply came back to take him. And I think that any other member or relative who dreams of him in the future will surely mention that he is accompanied by a little brown dog."

H. E. M.

Forest Hills, New York





"Can he really play?" a girl whispered. "Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in his life."

# They Laughed When I Sat Down At the Piano But When I Started to Play!—

**A**RTHUR had just played "The Rosary." The room rang with applause. I decided that this would be a dramatic moment for me to make my debut. To the amazement of all my friends I strode confidently over to the piano and sat down.

"Jack is up to his old tricks," somebody chuckled. The crowd laughed. They were all certain that I couldn't play a single note. "Can he really play?" I heard a girl whisper to Arthur.

"Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in all his life... But just you watch him. This is going to be good."

I decided to make the most of the situation. With mock dignity I drew out a silk handkerchief and lightly dusted off the piano keys. Then I rose and gave the revolving piano stool a quarter of a turn, just as I had seen an imitator of Paderewski do in a vaudeville sketch.

"What do you think of his execution?" called a voice from the rear.

"We're in favor of it!" came back the answer, and the crowd rocked with laughter.

## Then I Started to Play

Instantly a tense silence fell on the guests. The laughter died on their lips as if by magic. I played through the first bars of Liszt's immortal *Liebestraume*. I heard gasps of amazement. My friends sat breathless—spellbound.

I played on and as I played I forgot the people around me. I forgot the hour, the place, the breathless listeners. The little world I lived in seemed to fade—seemed to grow dim—unreal. Only the music was real. Only the music and the visions it brought me. Visions as beautiful and as changing as the wind-blown clouds and drifting moonlight, that long ago inspired the master composer. It seemed as if the master musician himself were speaking to me—speaking through the medium of music—not in words but in chords. Not in sentences but in exquisite melodies.

## A Complete Triumph!

As the last notes of the

*Liebestraume* died away, the room resounded with a sudden roar of applause. I found myself surrounded by excited faces. How my friends carried on! Men shook my hand—wildly congratulated me—pounded me on the back in their enthusiasm! Everybody was exclaiming with delight—plying me with rapid questions. . . . "Jack! Why didn't you tell us you could play like that?" . . . "Where *did* you learn?"—"How long have you studied?"—"Who was your teacher?"

"I have never even *seen* my teacher," I replied. "And just a short while ago I couldn't play a note."

"Quit your kidding," laughed Arthur, himself an accomplished pianist. "You've been studying for years. I can tell."

"I have been studying only a short while," I insisted. "I decided to keep it a secret so that I could surprise all you folks."

Then I told them the whole story. "Have you ever heard of the U. S. School of Music?" I asked.

A few of my friends nodded. "That's a correspondence school, isn't it?" they exclaimed.

"Exactly," I replied. "They have a new simplified method that can teach you to play any instrument by note in just a few months."

## How I Learned to Play Without a Teacher

And then I explained how for years I had longed to play the piano.

"It seems just a short while ago," I continued, "that I saw an interesting ad of the U. S. School of Music mentioning a new method of learning to play which only cost a few cents a day! The ad told how a woman had mastered the piano in her spare time at home—and *without a teacher!* Best of all, the wonderful new method she used required no laborious scales—no heartless exercises—no tiresome practicing. It sounded so convincing that I filled out the coupon requesting the Free Demonstration Lesson.

"The free book arrived promptly and I started in that very night to study the

Demonstration Lesson. I was amazed to see how easy it was to play this new way. Then I sent for the course.

"When the course arrived I found it was just as the ad said—as easy as A. B. C.! And as the lessons continued they got easier and easier. Before I knew it I was playing all the pieces I liked best. Nothing stopped me. I could play ballads or classical numbers or jazz, all with equal ease. And I never did have any special talent for music."

\* \* \* \*

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