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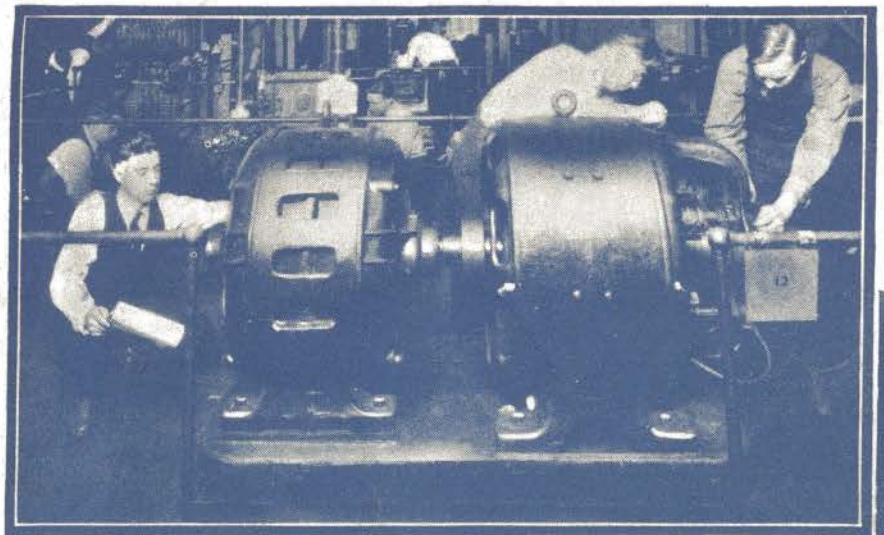

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GHOST STORIES

Vol. 2 MAY, 1927 No. 5

CONTENTS

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June GHOST STORIES a Sensation!

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THE PLATTNER STORY

A story that should not be read later than 10 o'clock at night.

Also you will find:

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It was not enough that a phantom stood between young Jim Stone and the girl he loved—but the ghost wore handcuffs.

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"Your son shall die at his father's hands before he reaches manhood" said the old woman witch doctor. Little did anyone think there was anything in the curse until—

CREEPING HANDS, by Clettis Dunn

If you saw an enormous detached hand chasing you through the night—what would you do?

These and a dozen other chilly, creepy, shivery tales make June GHOST STORIES an issue without parallel. Better order your copy from your dealer before he sells out. Do it now!

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Earth's noblest thing, *Lowell.* A necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill, *St. Chrysostom.*

IN THE TIME OF SARDANAPALUS

Every phase of woman's work, achievements, follies, wisdom, influence, power, has been written, but woman has had to wait until this twentieth century before man has dared to devote a monumental encyclopedic work just to her. *New York Herald.*

woman was a mere chattel—when Nineveh was besieged and he saw that it must fall he collected his wives and treasures and burned them with himself in his palace. Since then the status of woman has varied greatly; at times man bought and sold her; under the Cæsars she was his equal before the law. Christianity did much to emancipate women; it has remained for twentieth century America to make her a fetish. To-day she dominates; her preëminence is undisputed. She is the *motif* of most discussions. Our newspapers, magazines, and novels show how great is the place she occupies in the thoughts of all, and how powerful her influence for good or evil in every relationship of life. Of all subjects that have interested mankind throughout the ages, the greatest of all still—as it was in the Garden of Eden—is

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on a scale never before attempted. It is a historical and descriptive record of woman's place in the world.

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The authors have not hesitated to tell the whole truth. If they show faults, it is to accentuate virtues—if they tell how a Russian countess in winter had water poured over nude girls in order to provide statues for her gardens, they also tell how Joan of Arc inspired the French. Love, marriage, and divorce are the subjects of many interesting chapters. There are amazing stories of the beautiful *hetæra* in whose company the philosophers of Athens found solace; we have intimate glimpses of women of the Orient and of women famous as patriots and humanitarians.

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THE most important event in any girl's life is her wedding. Consciously or subconsciously she looks forward to the time when she shall be a happy wife adoring and adored. But how few ever attain that goal. A glance at the newspapers with their tales of scandal, inconstancy and divorce tells the story. Almost anyone can marry but how pitifully few marry happily.

A few months ago there came to Bernarr Macfadden's desk the manuscript of a true story so amazingly revealing, so poignantly interesting that he was impressed as he has seldom been impressed by any story.

As he read its pages he felt that if every girl and woman could read it it would do more than any other thing to help solve the greatest problem that ever arises in a woman's life—"How can I get married—happily, successfully, permanently?"

The Story of The Love Lives of Seven Girls

Written by a young matron whose name cannot be divulged, it is the intimate story of the love lives of seven American girls—her own and six other members of her social circle whose every thought, every impulse, every act she knew as intimately as she knew her own.

They all came from good families. They were all average, modern girls. They all had the same impulses, good and bad that other girls have. Each counted upon getting married in due time just as every normal girl counts on getting married. Each went about her search for a husband in her own way. To each the way she chose seemed to her at the time, the best.

Yet, today, a very few years later, Inez is dead, a suicide—Flora is in an insane asylum—Olive, also, is dead after a period of helpless invalidism—Masie is unhappily married, miserable, disillusioned, scorned by the man she loved—Rose, Blanche and Molly are happy wives of splendid men.

Why did the marriage hopes of four out of seven girls go on the rocks?

Why did only three girls out of seven realize their dreams of married bliss?

Why could not all seven have contracted happy marriages as did Molly, Blanche and Rose?

Read These Chapter Heads

Molly knows now that they *all* could have married happily if they had known then the facts about life and the world and men which they later learned by terrible experience.

She knows that because they had never been properly informed, some among the seven made practically every mistake it is possible for a girl to make.

As she looks back over her girlhood she realizes that she made grievous mistakes herself and that it is only by chance that she escaped so easily, that had Fate not been kind she too might occupy an early grave as do Inez, and Olive or like Masie be enduring a living Hell.

And because she believes that if every girl knew the things she knows the number of happy marriages would be increased many fold, Molly has bared her own life and the lives of six other girls, violating what in a lesser cause might be considered sacred confidences in writing "How Can I Get Married," which is perhaps, the most amazingly frank story ever published so that you and thousands of other girls may learn the real truth about marriage and the terrible mistakes that can be made in the search for and choice of a life mate.

Do not feel that "How Can I Get Married" is a book filled with platitudes and advice. There is not a platitude nor a line of direct advice in its nearly three hundred pages. It is a story pure and simple, an amazingly revealing story of modern life among the younger generation, a story shot with the smiles and tears, with the tragedies, and happiness of these girls whom you come to know as thoroughly as though they were your own intimate friends.

You Can Profit By the Mistakes They Made

As you read the series of events that results in ruined lives for Inez, Flora, Olive and Masie you will understand the inevitability of the dreadful results that followed.

As you observe Rose, Blanche, and Molly strive for and eventually attain gloriously happy marriage you will see clearly why they succeeded where the others failed.

In a word, by acquiring the tremendous amount of first hand information her book contains you can avoid the mistakes they made and apply to yourself the principles that brought success and lifelong happiness to some of them.

First Edition Now Ready

So deeply was Mr. Macfadden impressed with the power of Molly's marvelous story to enormously increase happy marriage that he made immediate arrangements for its publication. The first edition is now ready for the countless thousands of girls and women into whose lives its coming will be such a blessing. If you are a young woman of marriageable age, if you are already married without having acquired the happiness you expected, entirely aside from its flaming interest as a story can you afford to let pass this opportunity to secure the information that may mean the difference between happiness and misery?

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Can You Take It Seriously?

By GEORGE WILLIAM WILDER

WHEN a beloved relative or a close friend dies it is customary for the ones who are left, immediately to "go into mourning." Which means the wearing of black clothes. And during the days before burial, often for weeks afterward, blinds are drawn, houses darkened. Has it ever occurred to you to ask why?

In China, every house, with very few exceptions, has a screen before its main entrance. The screen is set parallel to the doorsill, and two or three feet removed. Persons entering or leaving the house, are compelled to take several extra steps to walk around the screen, in order to get in. Why?

Belief in strange ideas about the departed dead started these and many another Twentieth Century custom. Black garments were worn by the bereaved originally because the change in clothes changed also the identity of the wearer; and no ghost returning from some unknown bourne could recognize—or harm—a person who changed identity.

Blinds were drawn and houses darkened at the time of death, because of belief in the same strange ideas. Specifically, the drawn blinds and darkness, in sharp contrast to the sunlight and gaiety of more happy occasions, kept the spirits of departed dead from recognizing dwelling places known in life, and so kept "evil spirits" from coming back to do harm to those who lived.

Belief is current in China that ghosts travel in straight lines only, that they cannot pass through solid objects. The screen before the door impedes the progress of spirits coming back bent on evil—and the residents of houses so protected, are free from harm.

So much for custom and belief. Probe further, and you will find that back of them lies an insidious ghoul, FEAR. Without fear, no "strange ideas," no superstitious customs, no fantastic beliefs, could survive.

A healthy, thinking man or woman knows no fear. Learn the magic truth that in a healthy body there can be nothing but a sound mind, and fear will dissolve even as ice melts in the noonday sun, even as ghosts and hobgoblins vanish in the clear light of day.

The SOUL

Ronald Tracey and his Red Circle out with fresh violence, to terrify a Professor Travers and the

By Wilbert Wadleigh

THE state capital in the grip of a Devil cult!

It was unthinkable, horrible. Latonia, proud mistress of the South, once a stronghold of the ill-fated American Confederacy, was cringing in terror at the sinister menace of a circle—a circle in red.

Press and public clamored for the disruption of the dread organization, and for the speedy apprehension of the arch-fiend who directed its machinations, whom men called Ronald Tracy, and whom some called the Devil.

For Ronald Tracy had escaped.

Bankers, tradesmen, workers; men and women who had followed the spectacular trial with intense interest and sighed in relief at the penalties imposed, paused in their daily rounds to absorb the startling information the extras featured in glaring headlines. In brief, a band of forty black-hooded members of the *Red Circle* had stopped the train bearing Tracy and his two gigantic Arabian confederates to the penitentiary, and had wrested them from their guards.

The citizenry were outraged. True, the rescue had been made under cover of darkness, just before dawn, and at an outlying junction. But how had such a large band of men disappeared with the prisoners, as if the earth had swallowed them?

It was but a few weeks before election, and political cliques seized the opportunity to heap invectives upon public officials. Popular feeling rose high, and the civic turmoil threatened to embroil the state legislature. But the police accomplished nothing. Two days went by, and then horror broke upon the city.

Someone had foisted what appeared to be a hoax upon the public, through the medium of an advertisement inserted in all but one of the local papers:

ESTEEMED CITIZENS:

We, the undersigned, who have served you as Police and Civic Officials, wish to take this means of saying farewell. By the time this meets your eyes, we will have committed suicide.

SIGNED: WILLIAM KINNEY, *Chief of Police*
JACOB CONNER, *Lieutenant*
TIMOTHY O'HARA, *Sergeant*
PATTERSON SMITH, *District Attorney.*

THE copy for this advertisement had come through the mail, with cashier's checks for the exact amount of the rates drawn upon the Latonia Continental Bank. Each statement was signed, investigation proved, in the handwriting of the men concerned. None of the men could be reached.

After an exhaustive investigation, the advertisement was run, together with speculative comment. It created a sensation, as may well be imagined.

Four-fifteen the same afternoon an extra was on the streets. We will select the essence of the grim reports it contained:

Lieutenant Connor had been found in a cabin in the Adirondacks, dead from a bullet-wound in his temple, a forty-five automatic clutched in one hand. On one of the fingers of the other hand that was thrown across his chest was a metal ring, coated with red enamel.

Fifteen minutes later another edition was on the streets. This contained the information that Chief of Police Kinney had been found in the loft of a suburban church, his neck encircled by a hitch of the bell rope. On one of his fingers was a red-enameled brass ring.

An hour later a dispatch from Elmore was featured, this concerning Sergeant O'Hara. His body had been found in a room of an Elmore hotel. The gas jet had been turned wide open. Once again the red ring was noted—on the little finger of the huge left hand of the deceased.

No mention was made of the District Attorney.

Night settled upon the seething excitement these astounding developments occasioned, and dawn broke upon new ones.

AT five o'clock the old colonial manse of Mrs. Anne Grover, widow of the distinguished surgeon, Charles P. Grover, and victim of the *Red Circle,* was torn asunder by a terrific explosion. The widow could not be located. The remains of three servants were found among the ruins.

Concurrently with this report, which had come from Oakland, was a request by the police of that city that a search be made for both the widow and her daughter, Evelyn, who were known to have taken a suite in a Latonia hotel. Investigation disclosed that both had been absent from their rooms for several days, the management thinking that they had gone over the week-end to their mansion in Maspeth.

But the police at Maspeth reported that they had not been seen.

At a little past noon that same day the manager of one of Latonia's leading hostelries informed the police that one of their guests, Edwin Travers, had been missing for several days, leaving word at the desk, however, that he was expecting to take a trip. He had left the hotel in the company of a woman, dressed in black and wearing a veil, and seemed to be flushed and excited. A taxi had been called for them.

The harried police spread their activities in a floundering, desperate attempt to cover the entire field. The public mind was aroused to a fever pitch by the disappearance of Travers. The young psychist had become a popular idol through his daring rescue of Evelyn Grover several weeks before from the clutches of the *Red Circle,* and through his spectacular capture of Ronald Tracy.

Connor and O'Hara had contributed their share in the apprehension. Both were now dead, however. Had Travers met a more terrible fate?

Dusk was beginning to settle over the city when a patrolman noticed a suspicious character seated on the lawn of the capitol grounds, staring into space, mumbling to himself. Despite the tattered and soiled clothes and the disheveled appearance, there was something about the man that suggested good breeding and refinement, and the lethargic

DESTROYERS

band of devil worshippers break nation and bring untold torture to innocent young girl he loves

"Edwin," she repeated, "it is I—Evelyn. Can't you hear me? I am safe. I escaped, darling——"

mind of the officer struggled with various impressions. The man's face was vaguely familiar. Then:

"My God! Travers!"

A crowd collected around them as he lifted the man to his feet. The pitiable figure could not stand without support. To the officer's anxious questions he paid not the slightest heed, his green-gray eyes staring blankly at an equestrian monument near by, as he muttered incoherently.

He was taken to the emergency hospital. Investigation proved that he was Edwin Travers, on the threshold of death, and hopelessly insane. In the breast pocket of his tattered coat was found a marriage license, issued several days before, bearing his own name and that of Evelyn Grover, the missing girl. In the center of the document was a circle in red ink, with the inscription **Cancelled** within it.

Travers was removed to a sanitarium, and his friends and relatives notified. Prominent physicians and alienists were summoned to attend him. It was found that he had not eaten for days and he had to be fed by force.

For days his life was despaired of. Then slowly his temperature decreased, and he began to gain strength. But with his increased vitality his babblings became more violent, and every effort was made to induce him to conserve the energy upon which his life depended. He grew incorrigible, and struggled with attendants, and a straight-jacket was finally resorted to. This seemed to give coherence to his words. They made out obscure, disconnected phrases:

"Tracy . . . the devil! . . . human devil . . . Evelyn; they've got her. . . . Those eyes—green fire. . . . Ha! . . . I'll kill him with my bare hands——"

Mainly his continual mutterings were unintelligible, but his grim and horror-struck auditors heard enough to chill their souls. Travers had gone away with Evelyn to be married. Somehow, the diabolical hand of the *Red Circle* had reached out, snatching the girl into its invisible maw, leaving Travers a gibbering idiot.

Just who and what was this fiend Tracy?

The situation presented many enigmas, but the identity of the leader of the dread cult was the chief one. To fully appreciate the inexplicable, supernatural aspect of the situation, it must be recalled that some months before the late Doctor Grover had managed to expose the rendezvous of the *Red Circle,* and through a fortuitous circumstance, brought about by Tracy becoming overpowered by a cataleptic fit. Tracy had successfully been delivered to justice. Briefly, he, together with members of his cult, had been extradited to New York for crimes committed there, and had been sentenced to serve life terms in Sing Sing.

A few weeks later, Tracy had escaped. For several weeks not the slightest clue turned up. And then, in far off Paris, a prince of the Bourbons was found murdered, a circle scratched on his forehead.

Instinctively Keith turned toward the window

Several priceless paintings disappeared from the Louvre. Two attendants were found bound and gagged, one with a sealed envelope thrust in a pocket. The envelope was stamped with a red circle, and contained an ironical letter of "regret", signed by "The Master."

Exactly eight days later, Tracy was found dead in a room of a hotel in Latonia. An autopsy disclosed that he had died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Photographs in possession of the police tallied with the deceased.

Tracy was dead.

But was he?

For, several weeks after the interment of the corpse, the household of Doctor Grover was terrorized by the *Red Circle.* His daughter, Evelyn, convalescing from an automobile accident, became obsessed by hallucinations, imagining at times that she was a Marie Jacques—a girl of early colonial times, who had died a century and a half before. Doctor Grover was suddenly killed. . . .

Then had followed the amazing denouement: Ronald Tracy *alive*—a rendezvous of secret passages disclosed under the ancient colonial manse. . . . Evelyn rescued from a diabolical "experiment" Tracy (or was it the fiend himself?) was about to make—thanks to the intrepid daring of Edwin Travers, Lieutenant Connor, and others.

Once again the police blotter recorded the name of Ronald Tracy, while Ronald Tracy's body reposed beneath six feet of earth in Memorial Cemetery! And once again the papers announced his escape!

One thing alone lent a saving angle of logic to the case: though the second Tracy resembled the first, the Bertillon measurements and finger-prints did not tally.

Inhabitants of that section of the South will not soon forget the terror of the unknown doom that gripped Latonia, and that spread to the four corners of the country. It is difficult to look back upon the crowded events of the period and arrange them in proper order.

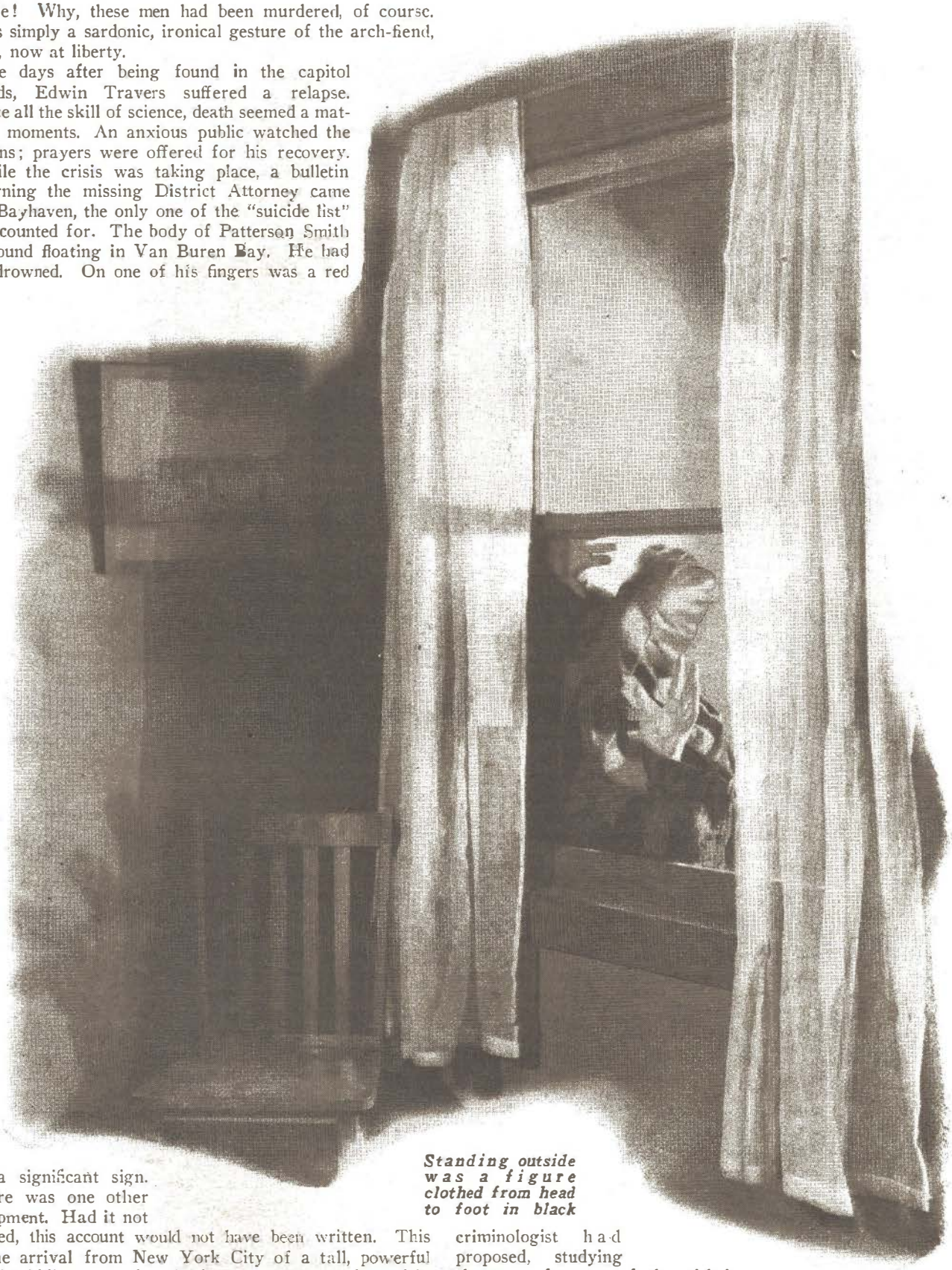
Three men were dead. A prominent official was missing. Mrs. Grover and her daughter had disappeared. Edwin Travers lay in a sanitarium, a shade removed from death—insane. The old colonial manse of the Grovers near Oakland lay in ruins. Three servants had been blown to bits.

For several days there were no further developments. Tracy and the two gigantic Arabians, as well as the band of hooded men who had rescued them, had vanished as if the earth had swallowed them. In vain did the police and Federal agents press their desperate investigations. Harried by press and public alike, many officials resigned, and popular feeling seethed higher. How could the city government permit such diabolical infractions of law and order?

Suicide! Why, these men had been murdered, of course. It was simply a sardonic, ironical gesture of the arch-fiend, Tracy, now at liberty.

Nine days after being found in the capitol grounds, Edwin Travers suffered a relapse. Despite all the skill of science, death seemed a matter of moments. An anxious public watched the bulletins; prayers were offered for his recovery.

While the crisis was taking place, a bulletin concerning the missing District Attorney came from Bayhaven, the only one of the "suicide list" not accounted for. The body of Patterson Smith was found floating in Van Buren Bay. He had been drowned. On one of his fingers was a red ring, a significant sign.



Standing outside was a figure clothed from head to foot in black

There was one other development. Had it not occurred, this account would not have been written. This was the arrival from New York City of a tall, powerful man of middle age, and a slender young woman dressed in black, and wearing a veil. The man summoned a taxi, giving orders that they be driven with all possible speed to the sanitarium.

He was Harrison Keith, once a famous international spy, and now a celebrated criminal investigator.

THERE was a grave silence in the room as Keith finished speaking. The physicians and police officials who were present exchanged glances, pondering the scheme the noted criminologist had proposed, studying the tense features of the girl in black, who had removed her veil, and sat back in her chair with closed eyes.

"Come, gentlemen!" Keith said sharply; "you must make a decision."

There was a murmur of conversation, and a short, stocky man of fifty rose from his chair, surveying the group with tired eyes. He was Jameson Courteau, eminent alienist, and physician, brought from New York (*Continued on page 67*)

The PHANTOM

Neighbors of that Freeman Street house called it complained of "knocks"—hard-headed Clausen claimed to see" bats". But not one of

By Dennis Bradley
As told to
Mark Mellen

GHOSTS? Who could believe in them, anyway? What man in his right mind could swallow the idea that after death people come back to this earth as vapor, or mist, or "shadow shapes," or the like? I for one could not. But that was before I took the house on Freeman Street.

I didn't disbelieve in them, understand. I was busy making a living, taking care of Martha—till the Lord saw fit to take her to His Land of Plenty, may she rest in peace! And after I lost her, who was the best wife a man could wish for during the nine years we shared bed and board and she put up with my temper—after I lost her, I say, I went right on collecting insurance and writing all the policies I could till I had laid aside a little nest-egg. You'd think that if anyone'd come back to me after dying, it'd be Martha; but once she was dead she was dead, for all I ever saw or heard from her again. No. There was no reason for me in my routine life to consider ghosts one way or the other.

When I heard that Dick Gruen was to be made superintendent at the office, I knew that my days with the company were numbered. I never did like the hypercritical, miserly stick-in-the-mud, and he knew it. Sure enough, he wasn't my boss more than six months before he called me into his office to find out why I didn't get more business. I didn't take too kindly to what he said. One word led to another, and I suppose I lost my temper. Anyway, I came out of his office minus my job as insurance agent.

I didn't care much. I had been waiting to get a few more dollars together before I went into the boarding house business for myself. Now was the chance. I went ahead and picked out my location, bought my furniture and had it installed, and there you are. I picked the Freeman Street house because it was handy to the "L" and the subway both, because the section was not closely built up and so, more attractive in summer; in short, I did all I could to make the house a first-class, presentable place where working people and others could live and feel they had a home.

When I was going around writing insurance, I saw many paying houses that kept boarders, and the people who ran them had little to do besides run the help, buy for the table and plan the meals—and bank their money. For years I figured on doing the same. But when I went into the business, you can be sure I had no more idea of running up against ghosts than I had of touring Europe de luxe for the next six months.

THE first I heard that things were not just right, came from Jake Mason, my neighbor whose house stood on the corner, toward the avenue. I saw him everytime I went up to buy my vegetables and stuff. The only thing he had to do, it seemed, was to sit on his porch and smoke a pipe. He used to make me wish I had joined the police force myself so that I could be retired on a pension at my age.

"Neighbor," he called to me one morning, "how're you getting along? Everything all right?"

I was on the point of telling him to mind his own business. I didn't like his manner the least bit. While I stood there curbing the snappy comeback I wanted to make to him, he came down off the porch and joined me where I stood at his gate.

"I ain't butting into your private affairs, understand," he went on. "Only—you had your nerve with you to take that house."

"And you got your nerve with you making a crack like that." I couldn't help it. The words came right out. "What's the matter with the house, anyway?" I asked, more calm.

"I ain't saying a thing's the matter with it, understand. But the folks who had it before you, stayed there only three weeks. And the Nortons didn't keep it more than a month. Before they came it stood idle for eleven years. They say the house is haunted."

"Is that all you got to detain me with? Haunted, my eye! Excuse me, neighbor. I got business to tend to. Good-day," and with that I walked off.

I wouldn't let him know he had made a hit with me, even if he had. When I walked along, though, and thought over what he said, I felt kind of funny in the knees. I had sunk all my money into fitting up that place, and he tells me it's haunted. And this after the Murthas and Miss Tibbits and Jim Peters and his wife were in and settled with me, mind you.

WHEN I came back, I looked at the house carefully, with a different angle in my mind. As I turned in at the gate, I asked myself, could this house be haunted—this fine place? Ten rooms it had upstairs, with a wide porch around two sides; and on the main floor, off the porch, there was a sitting room, dining room that held twenty comfortably, kitchen, and my own room. I had my office in a corner of the entrance foyer. Could this fine structure, all freshly painted inside and out, done up in new carpets and new bedroom furniture and all—could this fine old house shelter a ghost? I laughed at the idea.

I served three meals a day, and charged for them. If the business people, like the Murtha girls and Jim Peters, were home of a weekday, their lunch was there for them, and no fuss about extra charges. Half the time Miss Tibbits was home at midday; she taught music, gave lessons on the piano for a living, and her pupils were in the neighborhood, mostly.

At lunch that same day there were Miss Tibbits and Mrs. Peters only. I didn't take a shine to the Peters woman, thought her a bit nosey, in fact. But she and her husband were regular pay, so I let my personal feelings pass. But at noon I felt that trouble was starting when I heard the Peters woman say to Miss Tibbits.

"You're not looking so well today, dearie. Got a cold or something?"

"Me? Oh no. Thanks. I haven't slept well for a couple of nights. That reminds me," catching sight of me, sitting at my desk around the corner from the dining room door. "Mr. Bradley, I meant to speak to you this morning, but I forgot. I couldn't sleep last night for a shutter rattling,

MOTHER

haunted. Miss Tibbits, one of the boarders in it, fled, in terror of "ghosts"—little Dorothy Morgan them had guessed the astounding truth

somewhere outside my window, it seemed like. Will you see to it?"

"Yes, ma'am. This afternoon," I said, polite to her. I went kind of sick all over when I spoke, though I didn't let on.

There were no shutters on the house!

I went outside, to see if there was a board or something leaning up against the house on Miss Tibbits' side, th. the wind might have disturbed to make the noise. I found nothing. There were no trees near the house, and no bushes to scrape against the boards on the outside, either.

Finding nothing, I let the matter pass.

That afternoon I showed rooms to six or seven; I kept an ad in the papers every day, so I had applicants frequently. Only one of the applicants that day took a room—Mrs. Morgan and her little girl, Dorothy. They moved in that same afternoon, second floor, front.

I was tired, so I turned in early that night. I was hardly asleep, it seemed, before I woke up hearing a loud knock on my door. "Mr. Bradley! Mr. Bradley! Are

'At last, my child—at last. You shall be denied no longer—I shall rest in peace. Come"

you there?" somebody was calling in nervous, excited tones.

The door burst open and I saw Miss Tibbits' terrified face. A dressing gown was thrown over her night clothes, and her hair was done up in paper curls. She looked white as a counterpane.

"Oh, Mr. Bradley, there's a ghost upstairs! Come quick! I'm so frightened I——"

"Sure, Miss Tibbits. What's the trouble?"

"Come upstairs. There's the queerest——"

I followed her up to her room. She was on the second floor, to the left of the staircase. She had the room next to Mrs. Morgan.

"MR. BRADLEY," she said, and her voice trembled so that I thought she was going into hysterics every time she spoke a word, "look in that closet over there. I heard the most awful moaning. And raps, like somebody was trying to get into the room by knocking on that closet door."

"Like somebody knocking for admittance, hey?" I asked. I put the fool question to show her I wasn't afraid. I wasn't. I'm a fighter by nature. I love a good scrap, with man or the devil.

"Y-yes, that's it," she said, and flopped into an armchair.

I walked over to the closet, in the corner of the room toward the back of the house. I intended to fling open the door, wait a second or two, then go into the closet to show her everything was all right. The closet, like most in old-fashioned houses, was big enough to set up a child's crib in.

"My hand was up, ready to take hold of the closet door, when it stopped dead still. I was frozen to the spot, unable to move a muscle, for on the other side of that closet door, not two feet away from me, I heard a moan like somebody was in a death agony, low and drawn-out. Then a knock, loud and sharp, and——"

My hand was up ready to take hold of the closet door, when it stopped dead still. I was frozen to the spot, unable to move a muscle, for on the other side of that closet door, not two feet away from me, I heard a moan like somebody was in a death agony, low and drawn-out. Then a knock, loud and sharp—and in quick succession came four more, as if somebody was trying to get into a locked room and wouldn't be put off.

I felt my blood turn cold.

By will power I got myself to move. I changed my position slightly, so as to step aside when I had the door open, and avoid a blow—or whatever might spring out at me. I was determined to open that door, for I couldn't let Miss Tibbits see I was afraid.

"There—it came again!" Miss Tibbits cried out.

I turned around to look at her, forcing a laugh. I saw that her eyes were wide open, the whites showing twice their normal size.

"What? I didn't hear anything."

"The knocks," she said. "And that awful moan. Oh, Mr. Bradley, I'll have to get out of this house. I won't stay here another night."

THAT made me fighting mad. Lose one of my steady boarders, would I, on account of—what? I'd soon find out!

I took hold of the door-handle, turned it, flung the door wide open. I raised my fists from instinct, ready to land a blow where it would do some good. Nothing happened.

I bent forward. There was plenty of light in the closet from the dome in the middle of the room. Inside the closet I saw—nothing, except a few dresses and a coat and some hats. I stepped into the closet, circling my arms as I went, ruffling the dresses. Nothing was there.

"See, Miss Tibbits," I called. "It must be your imagination. Nobody's in here at all."

I turned around to face the spinster in the room outside. As I turned, something cold brushed my cheek. I made a pass with my right, but I struck nothing except thin air.

"Mother of God, what's this?" I cried, under my breath. It felt soft, like a bat's wing; cold and velvety and clammy. But I saw nothing.

"Maybe—maybe it's in the room next door," Miss Tibbits ventured.

"I'll go see." Suiting the action to the word, I went into the hall and opened the door of Number Seven, next along the hall. It was an empty room. I switched on the lights. The corner next to Miss Tibbits' room was bare. No closets and no furniture were there. Nothing except the spic and span room I had fitted up myself, hoping it would bring at least——

A loud scream sent me flying back to Miss Tibbits. I saw her up on her bed, crouched against the wall. It was as far from the closet as she could get.

"There—I—heard it again! That moan——" And Miss Tibbits' shaking finger pointed to the closet.

I got over to the corner in a couple of jumps. Nothing could I see.

This noise was getting on my nerves. What if the people in the front room heard the scream? Fine idea of a new house they'd get, their first night here. I had my business to think of first, ghosts afterwards.

"TELL you what, Miss Tibbits. I'll move you up to Number Three, top floor rear. That's clear at the other end of the house," I said. "You ought to be comfortable there for the night. And tomorrow I'll fix you up permanent—any room you pick."

"Oh, take me out of here. Anywhere, away from——"

I didn't call Ben, the house-man. I had had enough disturbance for one night. I moved her few clothes that she'd need in the morning, myself. When I got her calmed down, so she could sleep, I went downstairs to think this thing over. The clock on my mantel showed 3:30 when I turned in again, unable to dope the thing out.

I'd swear on oath I heard the moan and the raps. And I'd take equal oath I could find nothing out of the way in that closet. I got into bed, trusting that by morning the whole thing would blow over, and that'd be the end of it.

Nothing like it. The next morning I was in the kitchen, cutting the grapefruit for breakfast. It must have been no more than a quarter after seven. The dining room door opened, and there stood Miss Tibbits.

"Mr. Bradley, I won't stay in this house another minute. I'm paid up 'til tomorrow night. I came on a Thursday, you remember. I certainly think there's a rebate coming to——"

"Wait a minute—wait a minute. What seems to be the trouble?"

"Trouble! Ask me that! The house is haunted—and I'm leaving it. Do I get my money for the remainder of the week?"

(*Continued on page 82*)

Invisible hands again seized mine! — seized them and flung them from the keyboard!

Many a person has mediumistic powers, and doesn't know it. Loretta Mackay didn't know until—

By
Loretta Mackay
As told to
Mary Eugene
Pritchard

On A Haunted PIANO

I HAVE more than once in my life been asked whether I believe in ghosts. To answer that question in so many words is a difficult thing, for the reason that unless some proof is given, the mere expression of belief amounts to little. I would rather, then, let this account of an experience I had in Atlanta, Georgia, be my reply, and the reader may then judge what my feelings are.

It was on a bright May morning that, armed with several addresses furnished by the Rooming Bureau of the Y. W. C. A., I started out to find myself a boarding house. One location especially interested me, having been highly recommended by the young woman in charge of the bureau and which, I had been told, was out some distance from the city proper.

The "Y" worker who investigated the place had reported that it was a large, old-fashioned brick house, with charming gardens and grounds, owned by a gentlewoman, and I seemed to anticipate, pleasantly, the old dwelling that had been described to me.

Though thoroughly familiar, as I had thought, with Atlanta and its somewhat hap-hazard arrangement of streets, I had some difficulty in finding the old Whitson place, as it was called. I had been instructed to take a Decatur car and go out DeKalb Avenue beyond Inman Park, but when

I finally got off at Sutherland Drive, still following directions, I wandered around quite a bit before I finally located it on a nearby hill.

GOING up the hill I came to the grounds of a large, old, many-windowed brick dwelling. The old house seemed to be on the friendliest of terms with the many fine old trees that shaded it; English ivy had woven around it the loveliest of green tapestries. One arrived at its wide and inviting old door by a series of low, grass-grown terraces, steps leading from one to the other. A wisteria vine rioted over the steps, the piazzas, and into several nearby oaks. To the left I could see a large, rambling old flower garden.

I rang a very modern electric bell (somehow, I had expected to find an old brass knocker) and, presently, the charming chatelaine of the old house appeared. I immediately liked Miss Rebecca Whitson. She seemed to belong to that old place; graciousness and dignity seemed to emanate from both house and mistress.

I explained the nature of my visit, and was taken into a large, long hall, running the entire length of the house, thence, into a really beautiful old salon. The sense of charm of the old mansion but deepened as I seated myself. Houses, like people, have always had personality for me—this old place had it, superlatively.

The salon, in which we were sitting, had the very high ceiling and fine old walnut wainscoting of the ante-bellum period, with long French windows opening onto a side veranda. Many fine old pieces of mahogany and teakwood furniture were scattered about the immense room, and it seemed to me that flowers and growing plants were everywhere. But what instantly arrested my eyes and held them, was an old, square piano. This instrument was of rosewood, beautifully carved and polished, and somehow it dominated the room. I could have put out my hand and touched it from where I sat.

THAT old piano intrigued my interest from the first; it seemed almost sentient. While Miss Rebecca (as I shall call her, from now on) was explaining certain details of her household, terms, et cetera, I kept looking at it. I wanted to touch its shining wood and, finally, when Miss Rebecca arose, asking if I would like to go upstairs and inspect my prospective room, I assented eagerly, saying, "O, yes, but would you object if I first examined your lovely old piano? Somehow or other, it simply fascinates me; I must touch it."

She smiled permission, saying, "It is very old, and valuable, now, more for its rare old wood and carving than for its musical qualities. Would you like to lift the cover—the inside woodwork, music-rack and keyboard are beautifully inlaid."

Only too pleased at the invitation to examine it more carefully, I lifted the old square cover, to exclaim at its beauty as it folded back. The inside was even more beautiful than the outer case. The keyboard, side paneling and music-rack were exquisitely inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl, worked out in an intricate pattern of roses, forget-me-nots and twining vines; the keys, themselves, were of mother-of-pearl, of a deep rose shade, perfectly matched and in perfect condition; the black keys were of ebony. The panel, just above the keyboard, held a small, square silver plate, on which was engraved:

Haines & Cummings
—1826—
Third Avenue—New York

The outside case, its polished rosewood gleaming with different lights, was quite plain, though the massive legs and the pedal rack (it had only two pedals; the older instruments being fashioned that way) were elaborately carved, the rose and forget-me-not design again being carried out. A quaint, carved rosewood stool completed it.

MOVED by some strange caprice, I suddenly sat down at the old piano and ran my fingers lightly over the keys. Strangely sweet and elfin tones rang through the old room—like a golden voice grown thin and uncertain, but with lovely cadences still. Wishing to again evoke its fairy-like, tinkling music, my fingers glided into a Chopin prelude.

Instantly, without warning, a cold, invisible force pushed my hands from the keyboard. It felt as if two icy, determined, though unseen hands had grasped mine and were forcing them away. Astonished, slightly frightened, I looked around for Miss Rebecca. She, however, had walked over to one of the windows and was adjusting a curtain—fortunately, perhaps, for the expression on my face must have been a strange mixture of fear and incredulity.

"Idly picking up the notebook, I opened it. I stared with unbelieving eyes at the context. I began reading, stopped, shut my eyes; for there in shorthand was my dream set forth, just as dictated by my dream-visitor. . . .

"What could it mean?"

I looked at the piano—I looked at my hands. They felt stiff and icy. Shaking myself, mentally, I thought, "What sheer nonsense! My imagination has run away with me—bewitched by a wonderful old piano, in an interesting old house. Should I voice my uncanny impression, Miss Rebecca might think she was dealing with a lunatic."

I pulled myself together and arose from the piano. I then closed the instrument, again expressed my delight in it, and announced I would be glad to look at the room. As I followed Miss Rebecca out of the old salon, however, I kept thinking, "Beautiful but queer old instrument; I would like to know its history." And my hands still felt cold and numb.

The room to which I was taken was on the second floor, opening out on a vine-shaded veranda. The room, itself, was large, airy and comfortable. Its four windows framed sunshine and trees—trees that seemed to wave green arms at one. Old fashioned walnut furniture, old prints on the walls, seemed its natural furnishings. Then and there I decided I was going to live in that charming old house.

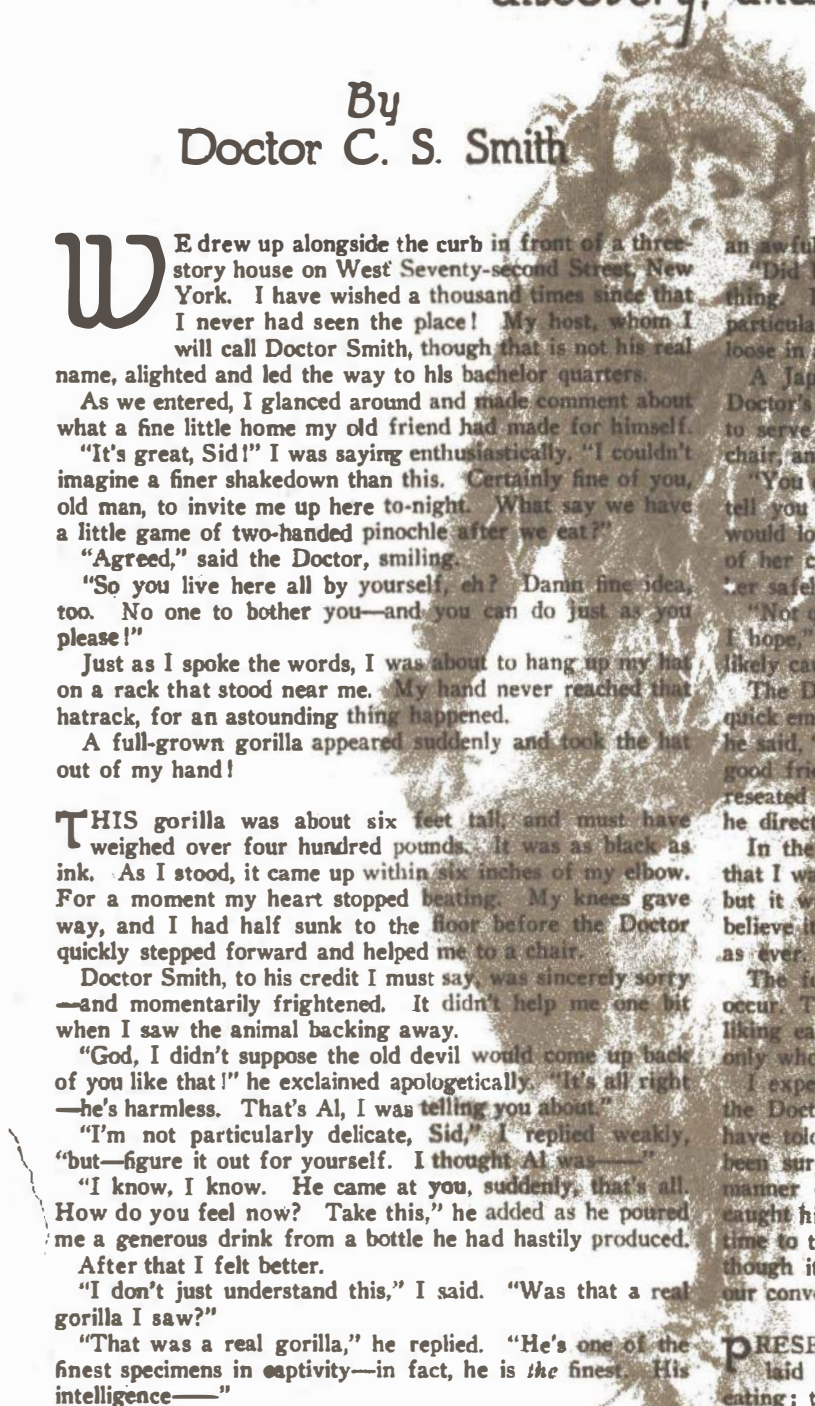
ARRANGEMENTS having been completed, I prepared to take my departure, and as I once more passed through the old hall and glimpsed that spell-casting old piano, I turned to Miss Rebecca and said, laughingly: "I like this old house; it pleases me very much: it has such a friendly and interesting atmosphere. I am sure I shall dream pleasantly here. Perhaps, the old house will whisper its secrets—perhaps, I shall even see a ghost. Surely, you must have a ghost here—some elusive, tantalizing but faithful spirit, presiding over the fortunes of the old place. One rather seems to just belong here?" (*Continued on page* 71)

The Man Who LIVED BACKWARD

Doctor Tangore had in his hands a secret men have spent fortunes to possess, as long as history has been written. But Tangore didn't know how to control his discovery, and so—

By Doctor C. S. Smith

As told to John H. Shuttleworth



WE drew up alongside the curb in front of a three-story house on West Seventy-second Street, New York. I have wished a thousand times since that I never had seen the place! My host, whom I will call Doctor Smith, though that is not his real name, alighted and led the way to his bachelor quarters.

As we entered, I glanced around and made comment about what a fine little home my old friend had made for himself.

"It's great, Sid!" I was saying enthusiastically, "I couldn't imagine a finer shakedown than this. Certainly fine of you, old man, to invite me up here to-night. What say we have a little game of two-handed pinochle after we eat?"

"Agreed," said the Doctor, smiling.

"So you live here all by yourself, eh? Damn fine idea, too. No one to bother you—and you can do just as you please!"

Just as I spoke the words, I was about to hang up my hat on a rack that stood near me. My hand never reached that hatrack, for an astounding thing happened.

A full-grown gorilla appeared suddenly and took the hat out of my hand!

THIS gorilla was about six feet tall, and must have weighed over four hundred pounds. It was as black as ink. As I stood, it came up within six inches of my elbow. For a moment my heart stopped beating. My knees gave way, and I had half sunk to the floor before the Doctor quickly stepped forward and helped me to a chair.

Doctor Smith, to his credit I must say, was sincerely sorry—and momentarily frightened. It didn't help me one bit when I saw the animal backing away.

"God, I didn't suppose the old devil would come up back of you like that!" he exclaimed apologetically. "It's all right—he's harmless. That's Al, I was telling you about."

"I'm not particularly delicate, Sid," I replied weakly, "but—figure it out for yourself. I thought Al was——"

"I know, I know. He came at you, suddenly, that's all. How do you feel now? Take this," he added as he poured me a generous drink from a bottle he had hastily produced.

After that I felt better.

"I don't just understand this," I said. "Was that a real gorilla I saw?"

"That was a real gorilla," he replied. "He's one of the finest specimens in captivity—in fact, he is *the* finest. His intelligence——"

"Where is it now?" I interrupted.

"In the kitchen, holding your hat I suppose. All he wanted was to hang it up for you. You probably gave him an awful scare."

"Did I?" I commented feebly. "Tell me more about this thing. I can't get it through my head how a real gorilla, particularly the size of that one, can be running around loose in a private dwelling in modern New York!"

A Japanese student of twenty or so, who acted as the Doctor's man of all work, walked in just then and started to serve dinner. The Doctor sat down, motioned me to a chair, and as he took up his napkin, remarked:

"You don't know how surprised you seemed, old man. To tell you the truth, you looked like I would think a man would look if he were to see his mother-in-law rise up out of her coffin—right when the poor fellow thought he had her safely buried."

"Not quite as much shock and disappointment on my part, I hope," I commented. "That last you mentioned, would likely cause sudden death, wouldn't it?"

The Doctor smiled, then became sober, with one of those quick emotional transitions common to all of us. "Seriously," he said, "you should not be afraid of Al. You two should be good friends. Let me introduce you two." He rose, then reseated himself as the Jap appeared. "Togo, bring Al in," he directed.

In the following few seconds I was busy telling myself that I was soon to be on intimate social terms with a gorilla; but it was like reading bucket-shop prospectuses—I didn't believe it. When the beast did come in, I was just as scared as ever.

The formal introduction, absurd as it was, did actually occur. The Doctor made the usual asinine remarks about liking each other, and I let go the gorilla's hairy paw, not only wholly unconvinced, but with a feeling of great relief.

I expected the animal might sit at the table with us, as the Doctor showed such high regard for it; or, he might have told me it was a relative of his—I would not have been surprised in either case. He elaborated in a jovial manner on Al's merits, and the beast appeared to have caught his mood, for it smiled, or seemed to smile; and from time to time it made queer, guttural noises that sounded as though it were laughing, and always at the right points in our conversation.

PRESENTLY it brought the Doctor his pipe, which he laid aside with the remark that he never smoked while eating; then it offered him a dish of olives off the table. It was making grimaces, meanwhile, and seemed to want to enter into conversation with me.

All this while I was experiencing a queer feeling—a feel-

ing of extreme uneasiness.

When Al had retired to the kitchen, I ventured a remark to the effect that the monkey family was a pretty poor imitation of man, and that, in spite of the Darwinian theory, they had nothing in common with man, and resembled him in scarcely a single respect—all of which Sid resented.

"Al has an enviable life," he told me. "He has most of the traits and privileges of a human being—and no worries. Of course he is not like other gorillas. He laughs, likes a funny joke, enjoys a good cigar, and writes letters with a pencil."

"Can you read the letters he writes?" I asked in astonishment.

"No, they're like a small child's letters—just scribble. But the idea is there. Some marks he makes I have thought looked like words. Once I thought I saw the word 'Alice,' but I couldn't be sure of it."

"That's strange," I remarked, struck by the curious idea. "If it were that word, is it not possible that——"

"Yes," interrupted the doctor, "it is possible. In fact, I'm already convinced that it is a case of memory."

"This man threatened to kill Davey"

"You said there is a story connected with Al. What is it?" I asked.

The Doctor paused as he was about to raise his coffee cup to his lips. "I have not told Al's story to any living person—not even to Togo, who I know would keep his mouth shut. As for telling it to a newspaperman like you——"

"Don't worry. I'd call you 'Doctor Smith' if ever I wrote the story," I urged. "That would keep your name out of it."

He seemed to consider for a moment. "All right," he agreed. "I will tell it on that condition."

His story follows:

IT was just four years ago when Tangore, the Hindu occultist, came to live as a neighbor of mine. His place was two doors east, where you saw that the old, run-down brownstone house as we came by to-night.

And he was a neighbor, which is not always the case in busy New York. He used to drop over very often of an evening to talk science to me. But I never returned the calls, though I was interested in the man as a personality—and in his idea.

I say idea, singular, because Tangore was truly a man of one idea. Men of one idea seem to get farther in this world, it seems to me. Tangore went farther than most of us. Anyway——

From the very first I had considerable faith in the melancholy Hindu, and I used to listen to him by the hour as he sat in my rooms here talking to me, all the time wondering whether the theories he was expounding would some day be realities.

The big idea that Tangore had, was this: He felt that the greatest problem that man had before him to work on, was age. He used to say to me that in the old Bible times, Old Testament times that is, man had unconsciously mastered the problem of age to a great extent, by sane, right living. He believed that Methuselah lived his nine-hundred-odd years, and many others like him who are mentioned in the Bible lived to the great ages recorded, because of the spiritual quality that was inherent in them from some Divine source.

Of course, I suppose there is some truth in that; but as with every other truth, it can very easily be misinterpreted and misapplied.

"Now," he said to me, "it's like this. It is evident to

anyone who has given it any thought, that in our age science is our only hope for prolonging life. And by that," he added slowly as he rested his dark, soulful eyes upon me, "I mean *spiritual* science."

"Why do you call it 'spiritual science'?" I asked. "What is spiritual science?"

"A combining of modern science's knowledge of the material, with man's source of spiritual power," he replied. "I don't mean idealistic or religious thought, understand. I mean actual contact with spirit forces, worked out in a scientific way."

In addition to being something of an occultist, Tangore, I knew, had been graduated from an English medical school in India; also, that he had continued his medical study in the United States. He was familiar with, and in his practice he had used the Steinach method of rejuvenation.

"As near as I can gather," I said, "your idea is a combination of the Steinach theory, plus aid from some spiritual source. And that, my dear Doctor, is in my opinion plain, unadulterated absurdity."

Tangore smiled knowingly and said nothing. I was to find out to my horror that he had reason to be sure of his knowledge. His attitude seemed to be that he was satisfied with what he knew, and saw no reason to resent my words—since they were born of ignorance and therefore not to be taken seriously, according to his viewpoint.

We let the matter drop there for the time being, but it kept cropping up more and more often as the days passed, for apparently it was on the Hindu's mind to stay, and he was determined to bring something definite out of it.

One evening he came in, his dark eyes glowing with suppressed excitement, and confided that he had at last effected what he considered to be a "partial spiritual continuation" of the Steinach method.

"Well," I said, "why don't you go ahead on it and experiment? There are always persons to be found who are willing to try something new."

"I have no desire to experiment," said Tangore, with just a touch of sarcasm in his voice. "I leave that to others. If I am blessed in finding just the right person, what I do for him will not be an experiment."

"If you ever should strike on something that is effective," I commented, "it is not at all certain that you would produce an unmixed blessing for humanity, by any means."

"I am not seeking to find a blessing for humanity," answered the Hindu sharply. "Do not mistake me, Doctor. I am not a fool. It is only those who are crazy who toil for humanity's sake. I am working for what I can get. 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.'"

"Why should I be so childish as to use a knife to threaten a man in his condition?"

ABOUT a week later Tangore and I were dining at a night club just off Broadway, on West Forty-eighth Street. A friend of the Hindu came over to our table, and said that he wanted to introduce Tangore to an old gentleman who was seated across the room, "with that very pretty young lady over there."

After the first few words the conversation between Tangore and his friend continued in low tones, and although it seemed to be secret, or at least confidential between them, I nevertheless heard most of it of necessity, because I was sitting so close to them at the small table. It seemed, from what I overheard, that the old gentleman across the room was a very wealthy, retired coal merchant, in his dotage, who had an idea in his head that he was in need of Tangore's advice.

Tangore's friend brought the old man over and introduced him to us as David Bishop. He was indeed childlike. It was intimated by the "friend" that Mr. Bishop was known as "Davey" by half of Broadway, because of his "friendliness" and "generosity." The friend joked about Mr. Bishop's wealth, and in a flippant manner suggested that the publication of the amount of Mr. Bishop's Federal income tax indicated that he was almost a millionaire. Bishop admitted it, and as he threw glances at the pretty girls dancing near by, said seriously that the only thing he lacked was youth.

"How old are you, Mr. Bishop?" asked Tangore, and before the old man could make reply, he added: "I should judge about seventy-eight, or possibly eighty."

"I am eighty-three, and will be eighty-four in less than two months," replied Bishop.

"You are now eighty-three, but in less than two months you can be thirty-eight if you so choose," said Tangore with slow emphasis.

"That would be living backward. Turn eighty-three around and you get thirty-eight!" He turned to the man who had introduced him. "Your friend, Mr. Tangore, is a joker," he remarked.

"No," said Tangore earnestly, "I am not a joker. I make it a point, on the contrary, never to make a statement that I cannot back up with the fact. We are all friends here

together and I take it that I can be frank. You are estranged from your family. You have a very strong desire—the will to be young again. Your wife, your two sons and three daughters, are all against you in this. They do not believe that you can become young again, and they hate to see you, a man of eighty-three, regularly attending the night clubs and gay resorts of pleasure."

DAVEY looked puzzled, and nodded. "Yes, that's true," he admitted. He probably was wondering how Tangore knew this. After all, if he had not been in his dotage, as the friend had said, he might have figured out the obvious fact that that same friend had informed Tangore of these facts regarding his personal history.

"Are you a fortune teller?" asked Bishop.

Tangore could not cover up his chagrin, in spite of his effort to do so. The Hindu considered himself a great occultist and scientist, and I am not prepared to say that he wasn't.

"I am an occultist," said Tangore when he had regained his usual composure.

"What's that?" asked "Davey."

"He communes with the spirits," interpreted the friend. "He gains from the spirits the power to do anything he wishes. When he wants to work a miracle they help him out."

I had to smile at this, and I guess Tangore himself felt like smiling at such a childish statement; but, strange to say, Davey did not smile. I realized fully for the first time that when the friend had said he was in his dotage, he meant exactly that. Davey believed the statement, and he had become very much interested.

From that moment on Tangore had a walk-over with Davey. Not only was he willing to be experimented upon, but Davey stated quite frankly that the sooner it happened, the better it would suit him. Thereupon the date of his visit to Tangore's sanitarium was fixed. Incidentally, Davey's visit was to be kept a strict secret from his family.

> "'As near as I can gather,' I said, 'your idea is a combination of the Steinach theory, plus aid from some spiritual source. And that, my dear Doctor, is in my opinion plain, unadulterated absurdity.
>
> "Tangore smiled knowingly and said nothing. I was to find out to my horror, that he had reason to be sure of his knowledge."

I HAD been seeing Tangore almost every other evening on an average, up to the time of our dinner at the night club; but after that he did not come around to see me once, and I received no explanation or word of any kind from him.

More than a month had passed. I was just getting up from the dinner table and was lighting my pipe and preparing to settle down to a comfortable evening with a book, when there came a hurried knock at the door. Before I could get to it, the door flew open and a young woman of about twenty-five rushed in upon me, all excited and breathless.

She calmed down enough in the next moment or two to be able to tell me what the trouble was.

"It's Mr. Bishop, a friend of mine! He's in a house two doors up the street here, and he needs help. I saw the 'Doctor' sign on your door outside, and I thought maybe you would come."

"Sit down," I said, "and tell me a little more about this. It's not so urgent that it can't wait a few minutes, I suppose? Tell me just exactly what the situation is."

She sat down reluctantly, and meanwhile I studied her face. As I have mentioned, she was about twenty-five, but I did not mention the fact that she was attractive. She had strong features, and was very much a woman, though young. She possessed enticing physical beauty and magnetism in such obvious measure as to make me feel uncomfortable.

What, I asked myself, could this twenty-five-year-old woman, with such compelling charm, have in common with eighty-three-year-old David Bishop? Then I caught myself with the thought that she might be his daughter. Yet no—she had said: "My friend, Mr. Bishop."

"I don't like the idea of going back there with you," I explained, "unless Mr. Bishop sent for me. Who is with him?"

"That Hindu!" she burst out. "That rascal Tangore!"

"And your name?"

"I am Alice Meldrum. I have known Davey since I was five years old, and he used to take me on his knee. His family and my folks have been neighbors for twenty years."

"Well, what's the trouble?" I asked. "Has he been taking that treatment that Tangore said he would give him?"

"You know, then?" She half rose. "I guess I came to the wrong place for help. If you're a friend of that scoundrel Tangore—— Well, I guess I'd better go elsewhere."

"Just a moment," I replied. "I'm a friend of anyone in distress . . . Now tell me: Does Tangore know you have come here to me?"

She seemed pacified.

"No, Doctor, he doesn't. And Davey doesn't know, either. I ran out of the place. I couldn't help it. Such a terrible thing is happening that I can hardly tell you about it. He performed some operation on Davey, or he used some spirit influence——"

"Never mind," I interrupted. "What happened to terrify you?"

"I—I wouldn't know Davey. He's entirely changed."

"In what way has he changed?" I asked. "I happen to know a good bit about the case. He wanted to regain his lost youth, I remember. Has Tangore been successful in his effort to bring it back to him?"

"Yes, but——"

"All right," I said. "That's what he was after."

I FELT disgust with Bishop, annoyance with this girl for spoiling a peaceful evening. I had an idea what sort of person this girl was—the type who'd dog his footsteps while there was hope of getting a dollar out of him. And Tangore was after the same thing, I felt. If Bishop was fool enough to get himself tangled up with these two, when he had a wife and family to look after, I didn't relish the idea of interfering. Besides, I had professional reasons for keeping out of the case.

Miss Meldrum had risen, and with a gesture of hopelessness she started for the door.

"I'll have to get someone else, then!" she retorted. "That dirty Hindu is going to kill Davey, I know it, because he has given his money over to me to (*Continued on page 74*)

The MYSTERY of the Vanished Bride

On the eve of her wedding she was forced to join the company of the living dead

By Margery Jewett
As told to
Julia Tait Shearon

"Since you won't marry me, your bridegroom shall be death!"

I WAS very much interested that winter in psychic research. Always more or less a student of the occult, it was my belief that this universe in which we live with its ever-appearing marvels, was far more wonderful than even the thinkers dared to dream.

But I must admit my interest in things psychic this particular winter was two-fold: first, my eagerness to acquire all the knowledge I could on subjects that were holding the profound attention of world thinkers; and second, the Professor.

The little buff brick bungalow in which I lived with my mother—just the two of us—happened to be located in a midwestern college town. "The Professor" was young David Lang, teacher of history in the big college only a stone's throw from my home. He was also a student and investigator of the occult, or rather, a reader of its literature. This being so, it was perfectly natural that we should discover each other before he had been a month at the college, and that the two of us, by the similarity of our tastes, should become fast friends.

In a very short time after our first meeting the Professor was almost an every evening visitor in my little parlor where I entertained the handsome six-footer to the best of my ability, discoursing learnedly on seances, ectoplasm, materializations, et cetera.

I had never had an opportunity in my twenty-four years, of witnessing any phenomena of this sort, though I hoped to do so some day. My knowledge of such things was merely second-hand, gained from study, but my reading had not been superficial, and even so great an authority as Sir Conan Doyle might have learned something from us, had he been present.

As the winter passed, the Professor and I reviewed thoroughly many phases of the occult—spiritualism, clairvoyance, hallucinations, dreams; and, as the spring approached, we were reading everything we could find on mental telepathy.

The idea of two human minds so thoroughly *en rapport* as to be able, by thought radiations only, to communicate, intrigued me beyond words, and I found this the most interesting of all the subjects we had reviewed during that very pleasant winter.

"Do you know," I remarked one evening as we sat comfortably before my familiar gas log, "I believe absolutely in the possibility of telepathy; that it has been done, and is being done. A while back I read an article in some magazine by the wizard, Luther Burbank, wherein he stated he was able to mentally communicate at any time with his sister; it was never necessary to send her a wire when she was needed at home—she would come promptly always in answer to a 'telepath' from him. And today's paper quotes some Russian scientist as saying: 'When the brain centers become excited, a chemical process occurs, accompanied by electrical activity, and these thought waves produce waves in the surrounding ether, reaching the mind, or minds, in tune with the sending mind.' That sounds feasible, but, oh, how I would like to demonstrate it!"

"Why not try to send me a mental message sometime?" spoke up the Professor, smiling at my enthusiasm. "I will try to tune in."

I laughed, and told him that I might try it some day. I little dreamed then under what circumstances I was to recall those half-jesting words!

"Moulded garments, yellowed lacy things, seemed to be draped about something . . . what? It looked like a kneeling figure. I bent over and lifted a fold of the crumbling lace. I could not keep back the shriek that broke from my lips. The garments covered a human skeleton and——"

IT was about this time, spring being near, and the stage set for such dramas, that Cupid, with not so much as a "by your leave," sauntered into my little parlor and took charge of affairs. Under his bewitching spell we forgot our study of psychic phenomena and began to murmur between ourselves low-brow "sweet nothings." It was not long after this, of course, that the town received the announcement of the engagement and early marriage of Miss Margery Jewett to Professor David Lang. The town smiled, well pleased. We had long since been voted a "charming young couple."

All but Michael Le Moine! This young man was the scion of the most aristocratic family that had ever lived in those parts, and was now the only living member of it. Michael and I had been sweethearts since childhood; we grew up together, and I had really expected to marry him—until a year before, when I had broken with him because he would not give up his fast friends and dissipated life. After meeting David I realized I had not loved him.

Michael was an egotist. He never dreamed that I had meant what I said when I told him it was all over, so I wasn't greatly surprised that he should rush in upon me the day the announcement appeared in the paper, with the demand that I break my engagement to that "school-teaching upstart," as he called David.

Of course, I had to be very firm with him, even bitter. I looked Michael Le Moine straight in the face and told him I would not break my engagement to the Professor, that David was a real man, and the man I loved, while he, Michael, had forfeited every right to my respect and that I had long since ceased to care for him; that his dissolute habits had disgusted me, and it was in vain for him to plead and promise; his opportunity had passed.

"Look at Le Moine Hall," I finished, "once the finest old place in the country; now a ruin, an utter ruin, because, instead of devoting your time and money to its restoration, you've chosen to spend it in drinking and card playing. I've no patience with you, Michael Le Moine."

I could see that Michael was very angry. His face was as white as death and there was an ugly gleam in his handsome eyes as he picked up his hat and started toward the door. He paused in the middle of the room.

"Listen, Margery Jewett," he said, tensely; "if you will not marry me, you shall never marry that d—— school teacher!" And he was out of the house and gone.

An idle threat, I thought, as I turned again to the work he had interrupted, just like Michael Le Moine, impetuous, melodramatic, full of words that meant nothing. Of course I should marry the Professor. How could Michael Le Moine prevent it?

Late one afternoon—just a week before the date set for my marriage to Professor Lang—I laid aside my sewing and decided suddenly I would go for a long hike. I had been much indoors for sometime, and felt the need of vigorous exercise. Without a word to my mother, who had gone in for a nap, I donned my hat and set out.

A short walk soon put me outside the limits of the town and into the country.

A lovely scene spread out before me. Waving young grain, knee-high, of a soft, soothing green color covered the gently rolling fields bordering the long, smooth road. The afternoon was an intensely hot one, and there was a hint of a storm in the air. The whole world seemed deserted. Except for the figures of several men in a distant field, not a soul was in sight.

I had gone quite a distance, and as I rounded a bend in the road and paused to enjoy the sight of a meadow—a picture it was—with dappled cows grazing about a cool little pond, I heard the hum of a motor, and turned to see a roadster headed in my direction. As it drew up alongside of me I recognized Michael Le Moine at the wheel. I had not seen him since the day he had called to demand that I break my engagement, and I was not particularly pleased to see him now.

"Hello, Margery," he said, in the familiar way he had addressed me since we were children, and with seemingly no remembrance of our last unpleasant scene. "I'm in luck. I'd no idea I would run across you out here. Come for a ride with me."

MICHAEL had decided to act sensibly after all, I thought. Well we had been friends a long time—too long to quarrel. Of course, I could overlook his recent presumption, but I wouldn't go so far as to ride with him.

"No, thanks, Michael. I'm out for exercise. Haven't had enough lately to keep me in trim."

"Too busy, eh?" And for a second I fancied a scowl flitted across his face—but a moment later he was smiling, as he continued: "Margery, I need your advice. I'm on my way to Le Moine Hall—and in your interest, too. There is a wonderful carved panel under the stairway. I want to

have this removed for your bridal present. It was done by some old Italian master and has been in the family a couple of hundred years. I thought you would like it for your home. I want your advice as to the best way to remove it.

Now, if I had at that time one hobby other than my interest in psychics, it was for antiques, old wood-carving, especially. I had often seen the panel mentioned on my occasional visits to the old ruined mansion five miles out from town. It had always excited my admiration, and my imagination quickly saw this rare old relic gracing my own little home. I was, therefore, strongly tempted to accept my erstwhile lover's invitation; after all, it was a small thing. At that moment there came a peal of thunder and I noticed the skies were covered with dark clouds. Big drops of rain began to fall. This decided me. I clambered into the car beside Michael.

Eunice was kidnapped in her bridal gown, and thrust into that death chamber

A mile or so ahead, Le Moine Hall came into view through a wild tangle of trees. The old mansion, once a magnificent old residence, now a complete ruin, sat back from the highway several hundred paces. The gardens and lawns for years had been allowed to run wild. Mouldy snake-like vines twisted themselves in riotous disorder over the whole place; rotting shingles and timbers lay about. It was unoccupied and was reputed to be "haunted."

I could not repress a shudder as my companion drove down the tree-bordered drive and stopped his car in front of the old house. There is something about a neglected old ruin that always suggests death and evil—elemental things. I had a feeling of this sort as I climbed out of the car and mounted the rotting steps to the accompaniment of a loud clap of thunder. The storm was breaking upon us.

With a hoarse, guttural noise as though in agony, the massive oaken door propelled by Michael's strong arm, swung open on its rusty hinges. We entered. If the outside of the house had been desolate and forbidding, the inside was more so. Dust and decay was everywhere, yet in its desolation there was a certain air of grandeur about it, speaking eloquently of its former glory.

In the wide front hall through which we entered, the broad staircase of solid mahogany leading to the upper rooms caught my eye. Through the dust-encrusted windows, vivid flashes of lightning flared at intervals across the dismal surroundings. But I was busy picturing the be-jeweled, gorgeously-clad ladies of generations past, moving gracefully up these broad steps, followed by the admiring eyes of gallant swains who had stood in this very hall.

My wandering thoughts were interrupted by Michael's voice at my elbow. He was urging me to be seated on a dusty, dilapidated, but solid-looking sofa that stood against the wall of the spacious hall. The storm outside was spending its mad fury on the tall oaks, and through the darkened window panes I caught glimpses of silver sheets of rain. It was a gloomy hour and a dismal place. Already I was regretting that I had consented to come. But here we must abide until the storm was over. I took a seat and Michael sat beside me. It was the first time I had looked at him closely. He appeared emaciated, hollow-eyed, and there was a look (*Continued on page* 60)

He REFUSED to

Are innocent babes born into of some restless ghoul come back

Eric Marston

By Eric Marston and Nictzin Dyalhis

GHOSTS? We think of them as pale, faintly luminous doubles or counterparts of people who have departed from this life. But are these the only true ghosts? Isn't it possible that ghosts of the dead sometimes evade the powers that watch over them? May not phantom wraiths sometimes slip stealthily into the bodies of new-born infants?—to take up again some love or hate not consummated?

Was I myself such an infant so chosen to fulfil the destiny of some dissatisfied ghoul? At times I doubt it. Comforting thoughts come, and I deem it all my imagination. Yet, at other times I feel positive that such an one I surely am! For I have, at intervals, remembrances of that which I dare not admit, even to myself.

My hair is white, my face is lined with the deep furrows due to shock; my eyes reflect within their staring depths something of that awful terror which has made of me an old man long before my time. For as years are counted, I am still fairly young, being on the near side of forty; yet I look and conduct myself more like a man over sixty.

My experience has been terrific. But let the facts speak for themselves:

During the World War I was with Allenby's forces in the Mesopotamia campaign, and I saw things then which I do not like to think about. Yet when I returned to England I was in no wise altered in appearance, save that I had been considerably browned by exposure to sun and weather. I took up the threads of civilian life precisely where I had dropped them, and was, as life goes, a contented and happy man. And why not? I was my own master once again. Furthermore, I was engaged to a most charming girl, even before the War, and she waited for me faithfully with that same sweet, half-shy graciousness.

She was dark haired, dark eyed, exquisitely formed; her face one of that rarely-seen but never-to-be-forgotten type which artists and others romantically inclined describe as "Oriental," perhaps because of the combination of dark eyes and hair, and slightly olive-tinted complexion.

Edwina was quite the antithesis of myself; for I, Eric Marston of Falconwold, English born and English bred, am typically English in appearance. I stood, before I acquired this feeble stoop, nearly six feet in height, was rather bony in structure, florid featured, gray eyed, and with light, almost yellowish-brown hair.

Was it memory on my loved one's part that, even as a child, she would have none of the good old English name of "Maud" bestowed upon her by her lady-mother—insisting that, instead, her name was Edwina? I am sure of it now. She was, as I have just implied, a trifle peculiar, given to reading odd books, studying forgotten languages, positively revelling in folklore, in tales of witchcraft, and in legends of the various historical places near by.

She questioned me eagerly regarding the scenes and traditions of the country through which I had passed with Allenby's forces. Naturally, I could tell her but little. A trooper on active service has small time to post himself on such topics. Foreseeing this, however, I had brought back with me such few mementoes as could with ease be transported.

An old Arab, dying, gave me as a last token of esteem, a small stone amulet, which he assured me solemnly was a very potent talisman. Both sides of the little octagonial tablet were intricately carved with queer characters. I call them "queer" advisedly, for a very distinguished savant assured me that they were in no known language, ancient or modern, of which he had ever heard.

But Edwina, the instant I showed her the talisman, gasped, murmured a strangely musical phrase, and went off into a dead faint.

Naturally I was appalled, horror-stricken. Had this occurred before the War, I doubtless would have resorted to the usual methods of lovers, and taken her into my arms, covered her face with kisses, murmuring fond and foolish endearments.

But my late experiences had taught me the value of practical methods. Despite my perturbation, I promptly brought her out of her swoon. And as soon as she came to herself she demanded the talisman. I was not overly pleased at the idea of her having anything more to do with the confounded thing, and expressed myself plainly, telling her out-and-out that if I'd known the effect it was to have upon her, I'd never have brought the amulet from the Near East.

She smiled all that away, as she did my request that she translate for me the phrase she'd uttered before she fainted. All in all, I was a badly puzzled man, and a somewhat angry one as well, when I took my leave shortly after.

BUT from then on, Edwina wore that talisman as a thing sacred.

"It helps me to know myself, for I lost that charm ages ago," she would state with a look in her eyes I did not at all admire. It was as though she gazed into infinity and saw something which, while it evidently pleased her, left me completely out of her calculations and out of her life.

"She'll get over her notions, once we're married," I'd assure myself. But at times I'd wonder if she would. "And if she didn't get over her notions?" "Oh, well, I'll make allowances!" Every lover has indulged in the same sophistry.

I was a proud and a happy man when I took her, as my wife, over my ancestral home, the gray old castle of Falconwold—from then on, to be her home likewise. Romantically inclined as she was, there was enough romantic history attached to the place to satisfy even her seemingly insatiable nature. And as for legends, both historic and supernatural, there was goodly supply of both.

Although Falconwold had a ghost, there was but little known about it. Once only had it ever manifested itself, and that was many, many years ago, away back in the time of King Charles the First. An event that occurred during that period gave rise to the belief that "our" ghost dated back to at least the time of the First Crusade.

There were two brothers of the house of Falconer, according to the story told me. Hotheads, both, given to

STAY DEAD

the world, imbued with the spirit to earth to fulfill its destiny? thought so, when—

Edwina, the instant I showed her the talisman, gasped, murmured a strangely musical phrase, and—

dicing, gaming, carousing, and all the follies of that period. Touchy, too, upon points that pertained to their "honor."

Filled with wine and self-esteem, these two brothers—and to make a black matter even blacker, be it said that they were twins—came to words late one night over a notorious beauty of the court.

To such hotheads there was but one course open. In less than no time the center of the floor was cleared, swords were out, and with but a valet each for seconds, the madcap brothers started to finish each other off as deliberately as Cain slew Abel.

Their slim rapiers had no more than touched when, without sound or warning, there appeared suddenly a mighty arm with broad bands of gold gleaming around it, and in its mighty hand was an enormous sword—such a blade as those two foolish brothers could scarcely have lifted, together.

In sheer mockery that terrific, spectral long-sword player

between the would-be fratricides; played around them and about them, brandished lightly as a feather in that huge hand. Gleaming and flashing with a lurid flicker, it swept in dazzling arcs until the brothers, appalled, dropped their silly splinters of rapiers to the floor and clung to each other in their mutual fear. At which, in final, supreme mockery, the great blade saluted them in different fashion than that in vogue at their period. A deep, bellowing gust of derisive laughter pealed in their aghast faces—and the apparition vanished as abruptly as it had materialized. So the story ends.

Needless to say, Edwina was gifted with a considerable share of that strange spiritual faculty called "intuition." I related the tale of our family ghost to her, and asked her what she thought about it. Her reply rather surprised me. "Surely," she exclaimed, "that was no Crusader's ghost! The spectral long-sword apparently gave birth to that idea. But the Crusaders wore armor, and that spectral arm was bare, with great torques of gold gleaming about it. And that seems more like one of the ancient Northmen. I think, Eric, that the ghost of Falconwold dates far back beyond the First Crusade."

But her mind refused to stop at that point. Would that it had! Her next question came direct.

"How long has this castle stood as it is? And when was it commenced?"

"Allowing for additions and renovations, it was first begun by a Saxon Thane in the time of Alfred, which would be about the year 890 or 900 A. D.," I replied. Then, struck by a sudden thought, I added: "Incidentally, there are old monkish scrolls in the library, hand-written, in black-letter——"

After that chat, whenever Edwina was missing from the usual living-rooms, I knew exactly where to locate her. She became a veritable bookworm, seemingly engrossed in her researches amongst the musty old parchments in the somber library of Falconwold castle.

"Behind my chair — a battle-axe. Get it, Saxon! I will fight thee once again— for her"

There came a day when I glanced up from my desk, where I was going over certain rentals and other business accounts, to see Edwina standing before me, a strangely exultant look in her dark eyes.

"Oh, Eric!" she exclaimed, all excitement. "The most wonderful, amazing discovery——"

IN her hands she held an old, yellowish-stained scroll of parchment which she opened and spread before me on the desk. It was in black letters which I could not read. To her it was as plain as everyday print, and she proceeded to render its bad Latin into good modern English for my benefit.

It would take too long to give it in detail, and would seem too prolix, for those old monks were not sparing of their words—but briefly, the scroll revealed to us an heretofore unknown page of the history of Falconwold. Allowing for brevity, I give it almost literally:

I, Rolf the friar, who am Chaplain to Count Hamo Falconer in this his castle of Falconwold, have, by virtue of the power vested in me as an humble servant of our Lord, this day placed upon the oaken door which closes the burial mound of the Norse Viking, Thorulf Sword-Hand, that symbol which all such as he—Trolls, ghosts, vampyrs, witches, warlocks, and their ilk—fear and avoid.

With proper exorcisms, with bell, book, and candle, and with earnest prayers, I affixed the charm, carved upon a silver plate to the door, so that that evil being should be thereby bound, obliged to await in his own proper grave-mound the coming of that final great Day when all bonds shall be sundered.

But until that time, no more shall the revengeful ghost of Thorulf the Viking be re-united to his unhallowed body to the sore travail of the countryside, for I affixed the silver seal, the symbol of power, at a time when his ghost wandered in the castle, leaving his Troll's body still seated at the table within the barrow-mound.

Let no mortal hand disturb the Silver Seal that holds him fast, lest that be liberated which may not again be restrained——"

"Isn't it possible that ghosts of the dead sometimes evade the powers that watch over them? May not phantom wraiths sometimes slip stealthily into the bodies of new-born infants?—to take up again some love or hate not consummated?"

From that point onwards, the scroll told that Thorulf the Viking was buried somewhere on the lands of Falconwold; that he had landed on our coast with a strong following of Northmen at his back and had promptly attacked the castle, some ninety years before the scroll had been written. After a bloody resistance, the garrison had been conquered. Thorulf with his own long-sword had slain the Saxon Thane Eric, and had taken Eric's beauteous wife for his—Thorulf's—leman.

So, with his Northmen Thorulf had held Falconwold, terrorizing the country-side with sudden, fierce raids. But Eric left a son, which boy Thorulf had spared at his mother's pleading. This son, coming to man's estate, fled the castle. He, Harold, son of Eric, in his turn gathered to him a great force of Saxons, stormed the castle, and in the fierce affray which followed Thorulf Sword-Hand was slain by Harold.

But Harold seems to have been a merciful man, according to those wild times, for he forbore to slay all the Northmen. Instead, he suffered those who had survived the actual fighting to inter Thorulf after their wild, heathen Norse fashion, and had then allowed them to sail away wherever it might please them; only, he exacted from them first a solemn oath that never again would one of them set foot on English soil.

Thereafter, Edwina never rested content until she located the exact place where Thorulf had been buried. It proved to be a low hillock which I had always supposed to be natural; and located only about a thousand yards from the castle. And that added fresh fuel to Edwina's enthusiasm.

She coaxed so earnestly that I detailed a small party of workmen to start excavating. They had better success than I had anticipated, for in a couple of days John, the head gardener, came to me late one afternoon reporting:

"We've uncovered what looks to be a door of some most mighty hard wood with stone doorposts and lintel. Door's got a queer plate of some black metal fixed on't, and a lot of odd letters burnt into the wood above the plate and on each side and below, too. Will you come and inspect it, sir—or shall us break in the door first? Although"—he added dubiously—"it's going to be none so easy a job, breaking in that door. That wood do be as hard as iron, a'most."

"Leave things as they are," I replied after a moment's consideration. "Send the men about other matters until I tell you to resume work there. Get them all away from that vicinity. Do you understand?"

He departed reluctantly, obviously consumed by curiosity, but I gave him no explanation. I meant that Edwina and myself should be the first ones to see what lay hidden within that burial mound. And if any breaking in was to be done, I considered my own muscles fully adequate to the task in hand.

It was late in the afternoon, as I have said, and for once Edwina was reasonable, agreeing with me that it would be better to wait until morning before commencing on that door. But she was in a high state of excitement, as I was myself, for we both realized what a wonderful thing was this finding the actual tomb of one of those daring Northmen who in their time had so thoroughly stamped their seal of terror upon the little island Kingdoms of the Angles.

THAT night I dreamed a strange dream, if indeed it was a dream. Rather I should say that the gates of the past had opened and allowed me to know somewhat of a former life, wherein I had sown causes that were soon to bear strange fruits for Edwina, for myself, and for another . . .

I saw myself, clad in much different garb than that of this present time. I knew that I was I, yet also I knew that I was that same Eric the Falcon, that Saxon Thane who had builded him the strong, fortified castle of Falconwold as a defense against forays of the wild, Northern sea-thieves.

In the dream-vision I sat in my great hall. Outside a tremendous tempest was raging. Presently there rushed in a shock-headed serf. His hair was dripping, his jerkin was saturated, but his manner betokened wild delight.

"A foreign ship—such as never before saw I the like of—in distress!" he panted. "She will strike the rocks—soon! Rare pickings—from the—sea! In such storm she—will—surely—strike."

I came to my feet in wrath, cursing him for his impudence. Thanes were no lily-fingered, mealy-mouthed gentry in that far-off time. I knocked him asprawl with a hearty buffet from my fist.

"Thou dog," I roared, enraged. "Since when has Eric the Falcon been named a scavenger-bird? There is a foreign ship in distress—and will surely strike, eh? Then will her people be in sore need of help! Get thee to thy feet, oaf, and summon thy fellows——"

A well-planted kick did the rest, (*Continued on page* 55)

My SEANCE with

With opinion still divided as to the genu unbiased witness recounts

By Colonel Norman G. Thwaites

"FAKE—fraud—charlatan," some people call her. Others say that Margery, the medium, is a genuine psychic. A distinguished committee, representing the *Scientific American*, could not agree on its opinion of her mediumship. The late Harry Houdini was strong in his denunciation of Margery as a "fake;" he wrote a book about her, attempting to justify his claims.

I have been called an unbiased student of spiritist phenomena. Anxious to test for myself the claims made by a group of truth-seekers in Boston, I accepted the invitation of Mr. Joseph de Wyckoff to attend a séance at the home of Doctor Crandon, of Boston, when the celebrated Margery was present.

It will be remembered that Houdini challenged Margery to a contest in which he claimed that he could reproduce all the phenomena presented at the séances held at Doctor Crandon's house. When it came to the test, Houdini had to admit that without an accomplice he could achieve none of these results.

In his discomfiture, the Magician sought to cover his chagrin by a stupid trick which forever put him out of court. At one of the sittings held in Doctor Crandon's house when Houdini was present, it was suggested that the spirit, Walter, should ring a bell enclosed within a box. This, Walter was to do, by exerting spirit force sufficient to depress a lid, or cover, which connected the poles of a small electric battery.

WHEN summoned to perform this feat of ectoplasmic force, Walter apparently failed. There was a long pause. Suddenly the gruff voice of Walter was heard to exclaim:

"Houdini, you damned faker, take away that piece of rubber. Turn up the lights!" The electric light was switched on, and there beneath the lid was found a piece of rubber, placed by Houdini, which effectively prevented the bell from ringing.

I am prepared to believe that Houdini saw in the controversy he started, a fine opportunity for publicity, and had no further motive for his challenge. The departed Walter was very irate at the pretended scepticism of Houdini, and now that Houdini has gone over, it will be interesting to see whether Walter is able to make contact with the Magician on the other side and, through the medium Margery, get Houdini to retract some of his opinions.

On the occasion when I was permitted to enjoy the hospitality of Doctor Crandon and his wife, the proceedings were simple and convincing. I do not pretend to explain anything. I am content to state that the manifestations presented were super-normal. The half-dozen people attending the séance were earnest seekers after truth. Of that I am convinced. There was no possible motive for trickery. It was to nobody's profit to hold the séance, whether successful or a failure.

We assembled after dinner at the top of the house in a simply furnished room containing, amongst other things, a large glass-walled cabinet in which was placed a chair. Margery took her place. I was requested to secure her hands with a piece of stout wire, to the steel rings beside apertures which permitted her hands to extend outside the cabinet within easy reach of the chair on which I sat throughout the whole sitting.

Having tied her hands with a sailor's knot and a "cow-hitch," I fastened her two feet to rings in the floor in the same fashion. I then placed a leather collar round her neck, and locked it. The collar was attached to the back of the cabinet.

For a few moments we sat in darkness. Then was heard an audible sigh. I felt a slight draught of wind, and a gruff voice said: "Good evening!"

"Good evening, Walter," said Doctor Crandon. "We have with us some friends tonight."

"So I see," said Walter. We were then introduced by name. Walter repeated the names, saying "Good evening, Colonel," to me. After some casual conversation, Walter was asked to be good enough to show us some evidences of his power.

I was requested to take from a basket beside my chair, several large wooden letters of the alphabet. This I did, placing them in a small receptacle which was put inside the cabinet. In the darkness I was unable to tell what letters they were. Almost immediately the wooden letters were thrown out into the middle of the room. I picked them up as Walter called out what they were. The first he called out was a "K," and on examination I found this was correct. Other letters followed, all named accurately.

Then I was asked to place some object from my pocket in a small basket. I put in my watch, an old hunter but with the gold casing removed from the face, and a crystal substituted. Others in the room added articles to the basket.

Immediately Walter began opening and snapping shut the face of my watch. Nobody except myself knew what I had placed in the basket. One of the other persons present, a woman, had placed a small miniature case in the basket; and she sought to correct Walter by saying that no watch was there. He laughed at her.

"This is a watch all right. Listen," and he snapped the case again. "But why," he asked, "has it got no crystal?"

"It has a crystal," I said, "but not on the inside."

"Well," he remarked, "I am afraid I have moved the hands by about twenty minutes."

ON examination I found he was correct, and he had bent the large hand as well as the minute hand.

Now, as I have said, this old watch was formerly a hunter, but for convenience sake I had the gold case cut away and a glass put in. In the darkness Walter assumed that it had a gold cover, and was puzzled to find that the hands were not covered by a crystal. When he came to the miniature case, he was again puzzled and could not give it a name. We also were puzzled until the lady who had

MARGERY, the Medium

ineness of the celebrated medium, an the facts as he saw them

Margery, the celebrated medium in her glass cabinet. Margery is the wife of Doctor L. R. G. Crandon, of Boston

Photo by Underwood & Underwood

supplied the article explained what she had done.

We went on to other tests. A light basket with luminous handles was put into the cabinet. Immediately it began to levitate—not only in the cabinet but right out into the room. It swayed this way and that. It rose high up toward the ceiling. I left my seat and placed my hands between the basket and the medium, and in fact all round it, separating the rest of the audience from the moving object. Walter chuckled when I did this. Then I placed my hands on those of the medium. They were deadly cold.

Presently I replaced the basket inside the cabinet on a little shelf. Immediately it began to roll backward and forward with such force that it fell to the floor. Walter told me to place it more carefully in the center of the shelf. All the time he kept up a running stream of conversation, interspersed with bright remarks and repartee.

I confess I found him witty, but not illuminating. One remark he repeated over and over (*Continued on page 78*)

The Flaming SPECTER

"Woe unto this town when I return from the oath I would do when I was living—C. K."

By Llewellyn Bronson

THE quaint little village of Briarwood, set high on the banks of the Mississippi, some years ago became haunted by a white specter that moved about at night and wreaked havoc in a very mysterious manner. It was not long before citizens of the heretofore quiet little town were almost afraid to step outside their doorways after dark. No one knew what might happen next.

I first learned about this when I visited my old college chum, Gregory Trenton, editor and owner of the *Briarwood Banner*. It was when we returned to his office after witnessing a strange manifestation of the specter, namely, the following ominous message burned into the wood of the bulletin board, in the village square:

> Woe unto this town when I return from the dead to do vengeance as you heard me take oath I would do when I was living. C. K.

Greg told me that the initials C. K. stood for Clark Kane, a poor pearl fisher of the village who had been convicted and sentenced to death on circumstantial evidence for the murder of Oryille Plaistead, Briarwood's Beau Brummel. The body of Plaistead had been found along the river bank about a mile from Kane's cottage. Half way between the body and Kane's house, a blood-stained club had been picked up, with bits of Plaistead's hair adhering. One of the village vagrants, Peter Ott, was taken into custody a little later, wearing Plaistead's gold watch, and he testified he bought the watch from Clark Kane for $7.

It was on this chain of circumstances that Kane was convicted—by a jury composed of some of Briarwood's leading citizens, Colonel Jacobs, owner of the village general store, being the foreman. Another man who had been especially interested in Kane's conviction was Matthew Barton, state senator and the town's proposed candidate for governor at the distant state election.

"The assumption is then," I said to Greg, "that Kane is back of these happenings—for instance, the warning on the court house pillar, and later, the court house itself going up in flames. There's where Kane was convicted, wasn't it, in that same court house?"

"Yes, Lew," replied Greg. "And the strange thing is, the law never did exact the penalty. Kane was accidentally burned to death in a fire in the workshop of the prison where he was being held awaiting execution."

THIS set me to thinking. Had Kane really returned from the dead? The burning of the court house was only one of several incidents with which the ominous sign, "C. K." had been connected. They were coming thick and fast and there seemed to be no way to trace their source. An instance of their mysterious working was given to Greg and me one night as we were walking along the village street together, returning home late from Greg's office.

We heard a scream in the vicinity of the court house ruins and saw a white thing disappear like vapor from over a prostrate form lying on the ground, which proved to be that of old Colonel Jacobs. Major Vickers, the town constable, reached the spot about the same time we did and the three of us helped the old man into Doctor Folsom's office, which was near by.

"Let's see what's happened to your head, Colonel," the Doctor said when Vickers had explained. He sat Colonel Jacobs down and switched a light on above him.

WE stood about him in a semi-circle, staring down at him —Major Vickers, Doctor Folsom, Greg and myself. There was no mistaking what our eyes beheld. The initials C. K. had been plainly branded across Colonel Jacobs' forehead! C. K.—initials of Clark Kane who had been sentenced for murder—and these initials were seared into the brow of the foreman of the jury which convicted him!

"For God's sake, what's the matter?" asked Colonel Jacobs, as he stared up at us, puzzled.

"Nothing—you've been burned a little," Doctor Folsom said, quickly, giving us a warning look.

"Burned! I thought my head would be a cinder—awful pain—do something to stop the pain—hells bells, are you a doctor? Didn't you ever see a burn before?" yelled the Colonel, getting back to his normal self again.

"Right away, Colonel," and the Doctor hustled around for some carron-oil and cotton batting—the old remedy used out in that district for burns.

"How'd it happen, Colonel?" the Doctor asked as he began dabbing the oil on the burns.

"Ouch!" the Colonel muttered as the Doctor seemed to press too hard on his forehead.

"You say you shot at something?" Greg questioned, giving me a sly glance.

"Something is right! I don't know what it was. I was just crossing the court house yard when something all in white popped out right in front of me. I didn't see any fire or anything, but this person in white got me by the neck, shoved my head back, and jabbed something against my forehead.

"What did he look like?" I ventured to ask.

"Didn't look like anything, Mr. Bronson—just white. I managed to get away and the party in white began to disappear. That's when I shot, but my head burned so that I staggered back and tripped on something."

"What do you make of it?" asked Doctor Folsom.

"Same as you—I don't know. But I'm going to find out and when I do there'll be pretty sad music in the air for that party."

The doctor started to bandage the Colonel's head.

"Let's see how bad I'm burned," the Colonel said, standing up and looking about for a mirror.

"It just smarts—it isn't much, don't bother," said the Doctor, nervously, but the Colonel was not the sort of a man to be deterred when he had made up his mind, and he crossed to a small mirror on the wall.

The Doctor made a move as if to drag him back but Greg stopped him and we stood there, breathless, to watch the effect when he discovered that on his burned forehead was a brand—the brand of Clark Kane.

Colonel Jacobs stared for a moment. We saw him stiffen

# of Briarwood

dead to do vengeance as you heard me take
This is the Flaming Specter's terrible curse

and I could plainly see his face go white. It was easily noticeable as he was a naturally florid man.

Finally he spoke.

"Come and put the bandage on, Doctor," he said, and there was fear in his voice.

The doctor obeyed.

"For God's sake what's the matter?" asked Colonel Jacobs as he stared at us, puzzled

"Do you know what sort of fire did it?" he asked.

"It was acid—some very powerful acid. How it was put on that way, without burning the rest of your forehead, is more than I can tell you," replied the Doctor.

Jacobs wet his dry lips with his tongue and braced himself.

"Will—will it always stay there?"

"It can be remedied—that is, a skin specialist can lessen the scar and—er—change the scar so that it will have no significance," the Doctor assured him.

"You dig up the specialist, Doctor, no matter where you have to send for him or how much you have to pay. And you, Mr. Trenton, don't you think that if you printed nothing about this, it might help me better to catch the party who did it, and make the scoundrel pay for his work?"

"I'll talk that over with you on the way to your house, Colonel," Greg answered.

"You—and nearly all of us—felt that those pranks at your store, Colonel, the initials and message burned in, and later the tricks with the groceries, was the work of a boy, or of several boys. Do you think this was a boy who attacked you tonight?"

"No sir—not by a jug-full. It was no boy! He was mighty strong; he bent my head back nearly far enough to crack my neck, and for a moment I was almost helpless."

"That's a jiu-jutsu, Colonel—a boy could have done it," I assured him, trying to get him to give us more information.

"It might have been, but this party who attacked me was no boy—he was too tall and heavy and powerful." The Colonel was quite sure of this.

I walked behind Greg and the Colonel as they went up the street because theirs was a business matter. But when Greg and I left him and went on alone I purposely waited

for Greg to speak. Not until we got to our rooms did he say a word. I could see that he was doing some heavy thinking.

Finally he turned to me as I lighted the room.

"Look here, Lew, this is beyond me—it's uncanny. I saw the darned thing, you know—white, and it was floating, I could swear to it. You pretend to be a shark about ghosts, what's your dope?"

"Don't get me wrong, Greg. I'm not a ghost-hunter; I'm no believer in the supernatural exactly. But, I am after the truth. It's been nearly a year and a half since Clark Kane was burned to death in prison.

"I've seen it three times, and the third time it spoke to me: 'You're next!'"

Why didn't he come back sooner?"

"Answer that one yourself," Greg said, with a nervous laugh. "But I notice you seem to take it for granted that Kane has come back from the other world."

"No—I expressed myself clumsily. I meant, that in the event this means that Kane has come back from the dead, why the delay?"

"According to a lot of stuff I've read—and some of it out of your books there—some authorities claim that the dead have to first adjust themselves to their new life in the other world."

"Look here, Greg, do *you* think Clark Kane's spirit is back in this town seeking to avenge his death?"

"I don't know what to think."

Greg said that he would not keep the story out of his paper. Colonel Jacobs was in cahoots with Matthew Barton and out to help that gentleman drive him out of town.

The story created a great sensation, but Colonel Jacobs had left town. Doctor Folsom sent him to a famous specialist who would lessen the scar and also obliterate any semblance of the initials. Doctor Folsom could not deny the story, and there were seven very badly frightened men in Briarwood after the story got out—the seven others remaining of the original jury that found Kane guilty.

Superstitious residents began buying back numbers of Greg's paper that contained a photograph of the original message found burned in the village square bulletin board. They began discussing it furtively, and then openly.

I went over the case of Clark Kane again in the files of Greg's paper.

I wanted to delve into it with the utmost thoroughness and to make a report to the Society for Psychic Research if I found anything of the supernatural that would warrant a report.

My second study of the case showed me that I had not really analyzed it well before. The whole case rested on the testimony of one Peter Ott. They said Peter was a sort of wanderer and tramp. Well enough, but what sort of a tramp? Was he just a lazy, harmless sort of man, or was he a crook, a liar, a thief?

I began to make inquiries. I talked with one of the old printers in Greg's office.

"Sam Walton used to know him, Mr. Bronson," he told me.

Sam Walton kept Briarwood's only sporting place, a combination pool and billiard parlor, bowling alley and cigar counter. There was a back room for card playing. The place was looked upon askance by (*Continued on page* 85)

"Ouija Never Lies"

They started a planchette experiment to while away an evening. No one could have foreseen the terrifying aftermath

By Margaret Delaney
and
Anne Irvine Norment

A VERY pretty young woman, whom I shall call Margaret Delaney, was having tea with me. As I knew her rather casually, and as she had half-way invited herself to call, I felt that some purpose lay beneath her desire to talk with me, and I was a little curious to know what it might be.

We chatted idly over my blue tea cups of amber orange-pekoe for a while, then my pretty caller made known the real reason for her call.

"You are interested in the supernatural, aren't you?" she asked. "I have heard you spoken of as the 'Ghost Lady.'"

"Yes," I replied, and I laughed at the thought. "I won that somewhat absurd appellation a few years ago when I used to entertain my friends at house parties and various other social gatherings by telling ghost stories. Seriously, though, I am extremely interested in the supernatural. It is a subject that always has fascinated me; and because I was known to be interested in strange happenings, many people have told me of their experiences along these lines. Perhaps you, my dear, have a story for me. Have you seen what you thought was a spirit?"

"Well—not exactly." She hesitated a moment. "But I know of a very remarkable happening, and if you like, will tell you about it."

"I shall be charmed to hear it."

The story she told me was indeed a remarkable one. I give it here, in her own words as nearly as possible, changing only the names.

ONE spring day my cousin, Beatrice Corlies, ran into our sitting room, her manner quite excited, and announced that Uncle Ned, her father, had leased Eden House for the summer and that my brother John and I, and several other young people of mutual acquaintance, were invited to go there with the Corlies on June first and spend three months.

"I told him he just had to do it," she said, and knowing Beatrice, who was an only child and could simply wind jovial Uncle Ned and gentle Aunt Amelia about her determined little finger, I could well understand why Uncle Ned "just had to do it."

However, in this particular instance, I did not blame lovely little blonde Beatrice for her demand. Eden House was one of the quaintest and prettiest old places in all the country-side bordering the town in which we lived. It had been untenanted since the death of its owner, old Mr. Blake Eden, over a year ago—save for "Uncle Moses," an ancient negro who had served the Edens for a lifetime, and who now was retained as caretaker by Doctor Arthur Hayes, their distant cousin, to whom the place had descended, he being the nearest of kin and Mr. Eden having left no will. Doctor Hayes, a busy and already wealthy physician, living in New York, was not particularly elated, it was said, with his inheritance, which to him was a sort of white elephant on his hands. He disliked the country and refused to inhabit the lovely old place even as a summer home, finally deciding to lease it as it stood to some reliable person until such time as he might be able to sell it for a good price.

Old Mr. Eden had been somewhat of a recluse and, rumor said, a trifle miserly. Certainly he had put no modern improvements into the place. It had been heated in winter only by large wood fires made in open fireplaces, and lighted by oil lamps hung from the ceiling, or attached to the wall by brackets, and its furnishings were rather ancient.

THE exterior of the house, which was built of dark brick, was over-run with ivy and Virginia creeper. There was a veranda in front, almost entirely concealed by a close lattice, over which ran a rambler rose-vine. Two large, deep bay windows jutted out in front of the house and two more on each side, their shutters entangled with the ever-spreading ivy. At the back of the house, some two hundred yards distant, lay a small lake, or pond, where water lilies grew. Willow trees were thick about its edge, their long, drooping branches almost touching the ground. Altogether it was quaint and picturesque.

On June first, three cars left town late in the afternoon for Eden house. They were Ned's roadster, carrying him and Aunt Amelia (who never felt quite safe unless Uncle Ned was driving her), a truck, carrying servants and baggage, and the big limousine, carrying Beatrice, Bob Van Scoy, her specially favored cavalier, Mabel Cheever, Tom Monmouth, and my brother John and me.

We arrived there about dusk. Uncle Moses met us at the door, bowing and scraping and hoping in that lingo peculiar to all old-time Southern negroes, that all within would be to our liking.

I should like to say that some of us experienced a creepy sensation as we trooped into the wide hall, for one expects this in a ghost story—but nobody did. The uniqueness of everything charmed us instead, and we darted about the house, exclaiming over it all—particularly the tall grandfather's clock in the hall, which, upon our entrance, we immediately had observed ticking away sonorously. The ceilings were high and the rooms large, promising to be delightfully airy on even very hot days or humid nights.

WHILE Maggie, Aunt Amelia's prize cook, was getting together some food for our consumption, we young folks ran out across the grounds to inspect the pond and speculate on its possibilities for fishing and boating. We were more than pleased with the outlook. As we started back to the house, Beatrice lingered on the bank and looked dreamily over the dusky water.

"Come on, Beatrice," I called.

"Do you know, Margaret," she said, as she joined me, "I have the strangest sense of familiarity with that lake. I feel just as if I had been here before and ought to remember something—and yet I know I haven't been here."

"Yes you have. You were here when Uncle Ned looked the place over."

"Oh, yes; but only for a few moments—and I didn't come to the lake anyway. The feeling is different; I can't explain it. It seems as if I have lived here."

"Well, you'll be quite at home then," I said laughingly.

AFTER a hasty "pick-up" dinner, which, under the circumstances, was the best Maggie could give us, Uncle Ned and Aunt Amelia, who were very tired, went upstairs, and we younger ones gathered in what formerly had been known as the parlor, and went about the pleasant task of amusing ourselves. We set going the victrola Uncle Ned had sent up before our arrival—which looked distressingly modern in its unusual surroundings—and danced on the dark, polished floor under the fitful and wavering rays of the kerosene lamps. We never before had danced in such an environment and we enjoyed it thoroughly. When we were tired of this, we drew chairs around the big bay window and sat cooling ourselves in the fresh breeze that floated in, bringing with it the fragrance of rambler roses.

It was Tom Monmouth, the ever-joking "comic" of our little group, who first brought up the subject of ghosts.

"This place needs something, Beatrice," he said. "It needs a ghost—a real creepy, crawly spook. An old joint like this without a ghost is like a drink with the kick left out."

"Oh, Beatrice, isn't there a ghost?" cried Mabel, disappointedly. "Not even a little wee bit of a one?"

"I haven't heard of any," Beatrice responded. "But I'll ask Uncle Moses in the morning. Maybe there is one."

"Spooks! spooks! come hither!" called out Tom. "Where's the Ouija board, Beatrice? Haul out the old family Ouija and let's get busy."

"You know we haven't any, Tom—they went out of style long ago."

I suddenly remembered something. "Maggie has one, Beatrice," I exclaimed eagerly. "I caught her working it one night when I went to her room that time she was sick. I'll bet she brought it. Let's go see."

Beatrice consented. Maggie had brought it. It was a little dilapidated and in need of varnish, but we returned with it triumphantly.

"HURRAH!" cried Tom. "You and Bob work it, Beatrice. Old Bob has been in such a trance, anyway, since he met you, that he ought to be quite a medium by this time."

We all laughed, and Bob and Beatrice sat down with the board between them.

"Lower the lights," went on Tom, and suited the action to the word. "Now, all ye spirits of departed beings who once inhabited this house, come forth and do your worst!"

"Thump!" went something out in the hall, just as the words left his lips. We all sprang to our feet, the Ouija board clattering to the floor. For a long moment we stared at each other in silence.

"What was that?" cried Mabel.

"We'll see," chorused the boys, and started toward the door. But Beatrice put out her hand and stopped them.

"Wait," she whispered. "Are none of you conscious that we no longer hear something we ought to hear—out there?"

We listened. "I know!" whispered John. "The clock—the big clock . . . it has stopped!"

It was true. The dull, sleepy, "tick-tock" of the big clock was gone.

"Oh, we are like a lot of silly kids to stand here like this!" exclaimed Bob impatiently. "Come on, let's see what's the matter with the thing." And he proceeded to the hall with the rest of us at his heels.

The hall was lit by a large lamp set in a stiff, stout bracket depending from the ceiling. Bob opened the door of the great clock and we soon learned the reason for its silence. Its pendulum had snapped and fallen to the floor, making the noise we heard.

"Perfectly simple and natural," he explained, to our relief. "The thing is old and worn out. Your dad will have to get it repaired, Beatrice. It was kind of queer it took just that particular moment to break, but it was only a coincidence. Couldn't have been anything else."

Our courage returned on the swift wings of gay, practical, modern youth.

"Sure," said Tom. "What dumb-bells we are! Ghosts!—apple sauce! Come on, let's pull old Ouija about a bit, just to prove we are not all idiots. Are you game?"

"Bob stopped and picked up the piece of paper—and his face went white underneath his healthy coat of tan."

"'Look, Margaret!' he cried in a tone that trembled.

"I looked. The room seemed to whirl about me and I clutched at him for support. I was as near fainting as I ever had been in my healthy young life.

"Bob was holding—"

WE were game. We returned to the room we had timidly vacated, and resumed our seats. Bob and Beatrice restoring the Ouija board to its former place between them. We did not even turn full the lights which Tom had dimmed slightly, but sat in the semi-dusk and waited for the "spirit" to move the board.

It was quite a long wait—or it seemed so anyway. Several little shivers went over me. It was very silent without even the "tick-tock" of the clock. The low lights flickered in the breeze from the window and cast queer shadows about the big old-fashioned room. We all started perceptibly as the tiny three-legged table with Bob's and Beatrice's fingers resting lightly upon it, began to move slowly. Each of them looked questioningly at the other.

"Are you moving it, Bob?" whispered Beatrice.

"No—are you?"

"No. Bob, I feel queer—I'm frightened; but somehow I don't want to stop," she murmured.

We held our breaths. It moved to the letter "F," then to "I," then to "N"—then "D." It paused there.

"'Find'!" I burst out. "The word is 'find,' Beatrice. Find what?"

"The hidden treasure, of course," said Tom flippantly. "Bob, you old fox, you are moving it!—I'll bet your are!"

"Then you'll lose," said Bob seriously. "I am not mov-

"It was my little blonde chum, Beatrice—but her hair had turned black!"

"Find Helen . . . Helen . . . Helen . . ."

Abruptly, Bob, who had been looking at her very hard and curiously, took her hand from the board and placed the Ouija on the table!

ing it." And his voice carried conviction in its tone.

"Nor I!" breathed Beatrice tensely. "Find . . . find what?"

As if in direct answer to her question, the tiny table began once more to move. It glided to the letter "H," then "E," then "L," then "E," then "N"—and again stopped dead.

"'Helen'!" we all spoke at once in eager, hushed tones, "Find Helen!"

"Find Helen," repeated Beatrice, "find Helen . . . Helen . . . Helen . . ." Her voice had a peculiar dreamy tone.

"Let's stop this crazy nonsense," he said. "It is just making Beatrice and all of us nervous."

"Oh, please, Bob, ask who 'Helen' is and why she is lost," exclaimed Mabel, displeased, in spite of her nervousness, at the sudden termination of the amateur seance, just when it was becoming really thrilling. But Bob refused quite positively.

"Oh, well. Turn on the jazz then, and let's dance," Mabel pouted. "But I think you're mean, Bob."

Bob started toward the victrola, (*Continued on page* 89)

He Told Me He

When Bob Willis' wife died, he lost himself. He was desperate. Then

By Jim Kains
As told to Victor Rousseau

I COULD not have been more surprised at anything than when, on answering the ring at my bell, I saw Bob Willis standing in the hall.

"Bob!" I exclaimed eagerly. "Come in, old man! I'm mighty glad you looked me up. How are you? Why, it must be three years since we met!"

"As long as that, Jim?" asked Bob, with a queer little laugh. "I've been away, you know. Nice little place you've got here," he added, preceding me into the small bachelor apartment that I occupied.

In the light I looked at Bob more closely. I was shocked at the change in him. He must have been about my own age—thirty-three, but he looked almost like a man of fifty. His face was drawn and lined, his hair was gray, and hung in uncombed masses over his forehead. But it was the look in his eyes that worried me most. There was something strange about Bob's eyes. They were not—well, the eyes of the man who had made the football team at Princeton, and had been known as a leader in the advertising world before he reached thirty.

I knew, of course, that he had been completely broken up when Marjory died. They had only been married two years, and if ever a husband and wife were devoted to each other, those two were. I had been at their apartment the day after her sudden death, never dreaming that the apparently trivial illness had already ended fatally. Naturally it was a great shock to me to learn what had occurred.

After that there remained in my mind a vivid picture of Bob Willis, red-eyed, white of face, his features drawn with grief. He had insisted on my remaining awhile, and upon telling me the details of his wife's last moments.

"Nobody dreamed her heart was giving out," he said, "until I heard a little cry from the bed. I ran to her side, and she put her arms around my neck.

"'Bob,' she whispered, 'I think I'm dying.'

"'Nonsense, Marjory!' I answered, trying to be gruff. But a moment later I saw that she had spoken the truth. There was no time to call the doctor, to do anything. 'Remember that I love you for ever and for ever, Bob,' she whispered, 'and I shall some day come back to you.'

"THAT was all. She died in my arms in a moment. Jim, old man, I've never taken much interest in spiritualism, but—do you think there can be anything in it, any hope for me?"

I had not been able to offer Bob that hope. I did not believe in that sort of thing at that time. Since then I had become less cocksure that death does end all. A certain experience,—however, that's neither here nor there.

It had been three years before I saw Bob Willis again. He had disappeared completely from the ken of all his friends.

He saw me looking at him, and laughed unsteadily. "I suppose I do look changed," he said. "The years take their toll of a fellow. I—dropped out of the game. I've been down South, holding down a small job and trying to pick up the pieces of my life again. It wasn't until six months ago that I really succeeded in pulling myself together.

"Now, I'm all right again. I've opened up the old advertising shop on Broadway, and I'm doing well. Expect to get back all my old business, and more. You're the first of the old crowd I've been to see."

He took the cigar I gave him, lit it, and began to puff. That was not the way a man in normal mental condition smoked. He was half-way to the band before my own cigar was well alight. And he was smoking in short, nervous puffs.

As if conscious that I was still studying him, he turned his eyes on mine and uttered that nervous laugh again. "You still think I look changed, Jim?" he asked.

"Well, of course, three years work changes in a man," I evaded him. "Where are you living, Bob?"

"I've just taken a little cottage near Riverdale," he answered. "It's a wonderfully secluded little place. No sounds to worry one. You know, I always hated noise."

I HADN'T known it. Bob and Marjory had had an apartment in one of the noisiest parts of New York, on West Forty-ninth Street, close to the Sixth Avenue Elevated. Noises had never seemed to disturb Bob.

"I'm performing some experiments," Bob continued, again with that nervous laugh that I was coming to detest so much. "I'll tell you about them some day, perhaps. Something big—epoch-making. And I want you to come out to dinner next Wednesday evening. I've got a Jap working for me, and he's an A-One cook."

"I'll be delighted to," I answered.

"There's a lady coming, a great friend of mine," he went on after a pause, eyeing me with a look that seemed to me to be furtive. "I'm anxious for you to meet her. In fact, we're going to be married."

"I congratulate you, I'm sure," I answered, feeling very warmly toward Bob at that moment. Marriage would help him to forget his past. It is not good for man to live alone—particularly a man like Bob.

"She . . . she hasn't been very well lately," Bob went on. "Eye trouble. In fact, the doctor says she must live in almost complete darkness for a month or so yet, if she's to recover the full power of vision. She——, well, you see, she had an operation. So you won't think it strange, old man, if we dine by a little red light?"

"Not in the least," I answered. And yet I did think it strange. I thought it extraordinary. If this girl's eyes were in that condition, how could she be going to dine at Bob's house instead of staying in bed in her own home, or in a hospital?

Bob hesitated. "It's this, old man," he said, with evident

Married a Ghost!

his grip on his business, his social life, he tried an astounding experiment

"Permit me to present you to Miss Millicent Graham, my fiancée," said Bob nervously

embarrassment; "she's Marjory's twin sister."

I was almost unnerved by Bob's telling me that. I had never heard that Marjory had had a sister at all, certainly not a twin. In fact, I had a distinct impression that Marjory had been an orphan and an only child. At the same time, I could not remember any specific instance on which I had been so informed. One does get wrong impressions about people, and it was possible I had been mistaken.

It was not so much Bob's telling me that. It was the curious, shifty look that came on his face again that unnerved me. Again I saw Bob as he had appeared that night when I blundered into the apartment, to learn that Marjory was dead; again I heard his account of those last moments with his wife.

And now Bob was to marry Marjory's twin. There was something almost repellent in the thought. Of course, I did not share the prejudice that exists in some quarters against marriage with a deceased wife's sister. But a twin—why, a twin was a part of oneself. It was like marrying Marjory over again—a second Marjory in the same body, or the same Marjory in a similar body.

Bob was watching me. "I guess it sounds queer to you, Jim," he said, "but if ever a woman was an angel, Millicent has been one to me. You know, the sisters had never met since they were babies—some family quarrel—but after poor Marjory died, Millicent came to see me. We corresponded all the time I was in the South, and I owe my mental recovery largely to her."

I nodded in acquiescence. I did not feel like saying anything more just then, though I was conscious of a consuming eagerness to meet Millicent Graham. We chatted in a desultory way for a while.

"By the way, Bob," something moved me to say, "have you been following up that line of psychic investigation about which we once talked?"

Except for his question to me on the evening after Marjory's death, Bob had never mentioned psychic matters to me.

"What—spiritualism?" he snorted. "Rubbish, Jim, that's what it is. A pack of impostors trying to defraud the ignorant and the credulous.

"We were married this afternoon—now, what d'you think of that?"

Most of them ought to be shut away for the remainder of their lives." He rose to go. "We'll look for you on Wednesday, about seven, then," he said. "Good-by 'til then, Jim. I'm mighty glad we've met again."

The more I thought over what Bob had told me, the more uneasy I became. It was a combination of Bob's nervous manner and what he had told me about Millicent Graham that bothered me—in particular, the fact that a girl who could not endure light, was coming to dine at his house, presumably alone.

I was a little early at the house on the following Wednesday. It was still twilight, and a white mist was creeping up from the river, and beginning to envelop the row of houses overlooking the bluff, at the end of which was the one occupied by Bob. It was a small, old-fashioned house, admirably secluded in a large, untended garden, with big cypress trees, half their foliage turned to a rusty brown, standing up like sentinels all along the white picket fence.

The house was quite dark, and for a moment I was afraid I had come to the wrong place, but then I remembered what Bob had told me about the lights, and went up the garden path and rang.

After quite an appreciable interval I heard footsteps coming along the passage. The door opened. The wizened face of an old Japanese looked out.

The apparition of the yellow man startled me. I had always associated the Japanese in my mind with youth, I suppose because all the Japs one sees in New York appear to be college students. The wrinkled face startled me, in spite of the welcoming smile.

"This is Mr. Robert Willis' house?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. Please to walk in," answered the old man.

HE showed me into what appeared to be a beautifully furnished room, but it was so dark that I had to grope my way to the chair that he pulled out for me.

"Mr. Willis told you about the lights?" inquired the Japanese, with a sucking intake of his breath.

"Yes, I understand that Miss Graham has had an operation on her eyes," I answered. "She—is she——?"

"Miss Graham has not yet arrived," the Jap answered, "but we expect her every minute."

"Mr. Willis has returned?"

"Yes, sir; he is upstairs, changing his clothes. He will be down shortly. Will you be pleased to wait?"

I waited in the darkness of the living room. There was not a gleam of light anywhere. It seemed extraordinary to me. Bob had spoken of a red light, but why was there not even that illumination?

There was an uncanny feeling about the house that was rapidly growing upon me, in spite of all my efforts to shake it off. And the silence seemed abysmal. And surely Bob was a long time changing his clothes!

I did shake it off, insisting that I had been unstrung by learning about Bob's approaching marriage to Marjory's twin. And I waited, waited——

Suddenly I started convulsively and gripped the arms of my chair. From somewhere upstairs I had distinctively heard a moan.

There it came again, a blood-curdling moan, like nothing human—the moan of a woman in direst agony. A woman's voice! It was impossible for me to mistake it. Following which came the sound of the Jap's shuffle upon the stairs.

Another moan, but not so agonizing—a sort of yawning sound, as if some one was awakening out of a deep sleep. Then a door closed somewhere in the house, and I heard the Jap descending the stairs very stealthily.

NEXT moment the door of the living room began to close, softly, imperceptibly to the ear. From where I sat I could see the thin edge gradually approaching the darker line of the jamb. A moment later, and there sounded the tiniest click of the lock.

Then there came a ring at the front door, and I could hear the Jap shuffling quite audibly along the hall. The door opened. I heard his voice:

"Good-evening, Miss Graham. Yes, Mr. Willis is expecting you. Will you please to come this way?"

I expected that he would conduct the girl into the living room in which I was seated, but, instead, I heard the Jap shuffling past me. I thought I heard the footsteps of a girl also, apparently accompanying him.

> "Miss Graham, with a bow and smile to me, passed out of the room on Bob's arm. I sat there, palsied with horror at what I had seen. How was it possible for a woman to live, and yet be capable of being dissolved by rays of light?"

I say "apparently," because all these maneuvers had not deceived me for a moment. I knew that it had all been by-play. There had been no Millicent Graham at the door. It was the Jap who had rung the bell, and had simulated the sound of her footsteps with some contrivance. Even now he was walking alone upstairs to where Millicent Graham was waiting.

Millicent Graham had been in the house all the while, and it was she whom I had heard moaning.

Well, it was no business of mine. But something was queer. And something was decidedly wrong—puzzling, too, because all these precautions and this mystification seemed unnecessary.

Footsteps upon the stairs again. Bob was coming into the room, a lady on his arm.

"Well, old man, I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. Permit me to present you to Miss Millicent Graham, my fiancée," said Bob nervously.

If my impressions of the girl were of the vaguest in the darkness of the living room, they were hardly clearer in the dining room, lit by a single, small red light upon the table. Millicent Graham sat upon Bob's right, and I was on his left, so that I was not in contact with her. She had not spoken yet, but Bob was chattering incessantly, as if he wished to monopolize the conversation.

"MISS GRAHAM has had a great deal of trouble with her eyes, Jim," he ran on. "She's really still a good deal of an invalid." Here he put his arm affectionately about her. "Try to eat a little of this curried chicken, my dear," he went on. I saw the girl fingering her knife and fork, but I could see that she was making only a pretense of eating.

I was growing ever more uneasy. There was something uncanny about her. And what queer clothes she wore—all white ruffles and flounces. When we had first entered the dining room I had noticed that her figure seemed enveloped in a dull luminosity, and now again I observed the same thing, and that it varied in (*Continued on page 63*)

When the Dumb Speak

By
Harold Standish Corbin

ENGROSSED in my newspaper I hardly knew when the strange person seated himself beside me on the bench in Central Park. My first intimation of his presence was when I glanced up to find him toying with the ears of a shaggy dog that lovingly laid its head on his knee and looked into his eyes. The stranger was tall, dark and heavy set. There was some intangible mystery about him that I could not fathom.

After a moment his gaze met mine and he smiled, flashing a row of dazzingly white teeth in contrast to the piercing blackness of his eyes.

"You evidently like dogs," I observed.

"Assuredly," he replied. "And why not? My life was saved by one once. He was a ghost dog. That sounds strange to you, a practical-minded person, but it is true."

A ghost dog! Yes, I was practical minded, but somehow I was inclined to believe the man since he was different from the casual chance acquaintance one finds on a park bench. But in New York, that great metropolitan city, one ever finds queer persons who can tell queer tales. I baited him for his story.

"I'll tell you the tale," he said at last. "I have told it before. At least it will be of passing entertainment for you. Perhaps when I have finished you will believe there are stranger things in this world than mortals know."

So I set it down here—a tale of a shadowy ghost dog, of malicious hate that continued even after death, and of the calm of a spirit that died a second death—just as he told it to me there in broad daylight on a bench in Central Park. This is the story, in his own words:

FIRST I must tell you of the dog. He was a shaggy fellow, a collie pup, about two-thirds grown when I first saw him. It has been my lot to travel much, in far countries and in near. I have a smattering of information of eastern occultism. I believe that souls can transcend themselves—that they also can precipitate themselves from out their mortal bodies, either to the detriment, or to the good, of man. But that is beside the point.

In my travels I was journeying by automobile through your western country where great farms spread their broad acres to the sun. The fields were peaceful in the summer heat and my car sped rapidly between them. The breeze against my face and the exhilaration of the motion made me feel glad. In the midst of it all, however, I heard faintly the yelping of a dog in pain. The sound hurt me, for I have ever been sensitive to the cries of animals in trouble. I slowed my car to locate, if possible, the sound.

I discovered its source. Nearby, in a farmyard in front of a house, a great brute of a man was beating a dog. As I said, I always have loved dogs, and the attack of that brute on the animal, which was not fully grown, stirred me with wrath. I stopped my car to watch a moment.

The man was a giant in stature, with a hard, evil face, made hideous in its rage. I never have seen a more malignant expression of bestial passion. He was one of those pitiable persons who are born evil, who go through life uncontrolled either by themselves or society, and who vent their spite and unbridled will on such helpless things as dogs—and women. And if anyone dares object or cross them, they become killers, filled with hate as venomous and lasting as a snake's poison.

The man's actions made me stiffen with anger. Filled with indignation I jumped from my car and leaped the fence without considering what I was about to do. As I strode towards the man, he struck the dog with a great club and knocked it senseless. He stopped with arm uplifted again as I approached.

"Stop it! Stop it instantly!" I cried.

He stood amazed, that anyone would dare question his right to beat the animal.

"Who are you, and what business is it of yours?" he snarled. "I'll teach him to bring my coat, or I'll kill him!"

"But he's only a puppy. He doesn't understand. You cannot teach him that way," I argued.

BLACK murder rose to his face, so intense was his passion. He hesitated only long enough to bestow a cruel kick on the dog's body, and then he was upon me, his tremendous strength in its suddenness, bearing me almost off my feet.

But I know a thing or two about the *savate*—that science of boxing with the feet. I have a fair manner of sword play and in my wanderings about the earth I have picked up a bit of that system of far-east wrestling that native teachers have brought even to this country. Quickly I recovered my balance and had secured the hold I wanted. I heaved and tossed him over one shoulder where he fell with a shock that shook the ground. Well I knew there was murder in his heart and he would do for me if ever I let him get up, and so I followed my advantage by putting one knee on his body and twining my fingers about his throat.

His strength was gigantic, and as we tugged and strained it seemed as though he would best me. But I clung to his throat and soon his breath came in gasps, his eyes protruded and his tongue hung from his open mouth. His straining grew weaker and lest I kill him there, I let go my hold.

For a space he lay on the ground unable to speak and with eyes closed. His breath came in gurgling, wheezing gasps like an asthmatic old person struggling for air. Then, with a few more sucking spasms of his throat he began to recover. He could not speak, but from his eyes there gleamed the vilest hate for me that ever was inspired by a soul sold to the devil. He tried to rise but fell back again. I knew he would be his own vile self shortly and though I am no coward, it seemed best that I go, without courting further danger to myself.

But before I went I took from my pocket a suitable number of bills and laid them beside him. His gaze followed my every movement and if hate could have harmed me, I surely would have been murdered then and there. In return for the bills I had decided I would take the dog.

AS I turned to go, the brute raised himself on one elbow, and shook his fist.

"You wait," said the big brute croakingly. "Sometime we'll meet again—and I'll get you, just as you got me!"

As I drove away across the country, through the occasional woodlands with their verdure and sunshine, the dog lay beside me on the seat. I wondered why such brutes as that man I had left were allowed to clutter this good earth

Little did this stranger dream that this kindness to a dumb animal would some time react to his aid when he faced an avenging killer from beyond the grave

with their hate, their vindictiveness and their passion. It is for such that angels weep and men build prisons and scaffolds.

The effects of the beating that pup received were to remain with him until he died. His spirit never recovered. A high-strung collie is a sensitive animal, and this dog seemed to have the feelings of a human being. It may be that some vital organ in his rather frail body had been fatally injured by the blows of the heavy club, but I still think that it was his spirit, not his body, that had been crushed. He became sickly, languished for awhile, and finally died. Just before he died, he turned his head toward me and weakly licked my hand as though in grateful appreciation of what I had tried and wanted to do for him. With a sigh of contentment his body relaxed and his spirit went away.

I dug a shallow grave for him, on beyond a spring where the shrubbery formed a leafy bower, and turned in pity away.

And now I must tell you of that malignant hate that lived after death—as malignant as a loathsome disease, and of how I was close to death itself.

"You wait! Sometime we'll meet again—and I'll get you!"

For a time it was my lot to live in your great metropolis, and since it ever has been my interest to study cross sections of life I did not go to a hotel, but sought a part of the city where I might be close to the pulsating heart of its people I found a room in West Twenty-second Street, in the old Chelsea district. It was one of those old residences beyond Ninth Avenue where each is as like the other as though cast in the same mold.

Each has a high stoop leading above the basement to the first story proper. Each has the same number of floors and

windows. Each has its own iron fence, patch of greensward and grilled bannister leading to the front door. And each has its own backyard where rubbish and ashes and odds and ends have replaced the tea gardens and lawns and flower beds of other times.

From the first I felt the presence of a ghost. The very atmosphere was ghostly. Nearby was the house of Forrest, that old-time actor. Among the chimney pots I could imagine Kris Kringle and his reindeer floating filmly-like, to return to the abode of the person who fancifully created them there "on the night before Christmas." Everywhere was the sense of departed grandeur—of those days when fine gentlemen and ladies lived in the fine residences and drove their spans and had their parties.

I was unable to defend myself against the thing creeping toward me

Now all that is changed. The fine residences have become rooming houses, shabby at the front and worse at the back. People of a score of old-world nationalities are garrulous along the street, and social prestige is judged by the number of ashcans on the sidewalks. Swarthy sailors from the ships that lie at the foot of the street go roistering by at night and once a drunken man was beaten and robbed before my own window.

The locality forbodes evil after the daylight has gone. The boarded windows of an ancient residence across the way, involved in some old litigation, looked down on the street like the blank, unseeing eyes of a skull.

My own place was full of creakings and sighs that were unaccountable, but that seemed to bemoan the desolation into which the neighborhood had been cast. Mrs. Purdy, mistress of the house in which I had taken quarters, was herself the counterpart of a witch, with beady eyes and hairy lip. How ancient she was I do not know. But I could tell from afar when she was about to visit my room, for I could hear her slow step on the stairs and her labored, wheezy breathing long before she rapped at my door to borrow the evening news journal. I gave it to her quickly, whether or not I had finished with it, for her presence disturbed me and I felt ill at ease as she peered at me in the somber light of the miserable gas lamp.

Yet I stayed because the place interested me and I knew there was a story of tragedy in the lives of all the roomers, from the dispirited little blond girl who lived in what had once been the attic, to the old sea captain whose mind was sick and who muttered to himself of strange islands and tropical storms.

It was one of those melancholy nights in late October with which my story deals. The wind was rising and soon I felt that rain would follow. Whistles of tugs and other vessels on the river irritated me with their continuous moaning—like lost souls doomed to wander forever in the nether world, and who had come back to earth temporarily to seek sympathy and to cast evil spells on those who did not sympathize.

I could not sleep. I had been reading for a time but my thoughts wandered to that farmer who had beaten the dog to death. That very day I had had a letter from a business acquaintance in the little city near the man's farm, and in the letter was the news that the farmer had been found dead a few days before. He had fallen from a scaffolding in the barn. A hired man had heard his beast-like cry as he fell, and had hurried on to aid him.

The man was beyond aid. His back had been broken and he died, not with a prayer on his (*Continued on page* 80)

The Revelations of an EXECUTIONER

He thought he killed over a hundred men—but all of them lived on, ghouls to torment him, to drive him to that frenzy of desperation when——

By "John Huberston"

I HAVE executed 127 men. Calmly, and without even any nervousness apparent in me, I have pulled the switch that sent the deadly electric fangs crashing through their bodies, right after I had stood by and watched them cringe and moan, and call upon God for help.

Perhaps it is weakness in me that has permitted me to do this in such cold-blooded fashion. Perhaps I was a coward to do it, for they were defenseless. I am willing to admit anything of myself in respect to these particular acts of mine, and I will not try to hide back of the excuse that these killings were "official," and therefore with no blame attached, since they were not only sanctioned, but ordered by law.

Let me confess that it was my conscience that made me quit, and that the damnable torture of mind and soul I had to pass through before I learned the lesson that a man cannot kill his fellow-men and get away with it—whether "officially" or not—is more than I can express here on these pages. It goes deeper into my soul than I am able to make you understand.

I HAD been at the business of killing men for nine years. I had become hardened, so I thought, and nothing could touch me. True, I had seen some heart-rending things, and my sympathy had been called upon plenty of times. But I did not let that interfere with the business in hand. My job was to do the killing and collect the $150 for each man I sent to his death, and I didn't intend to let anything interfere with that part of it.

Then came the execution of the Calhoun boy.

Back of the prison that night I found his mother kneeling and praying to God for help. I was taking a stroll and a smoke before I would be called to the death chamber at midnight for the executions. There were three of them that night. and this Calhoun boy was one of them.

It hit me hard, the way that poor mother spoke to me when I questioned her. I felt like a guilty dog as I walked back to the prison.

On my way from the chair to the switch room, the face of Calhoun's mother was before me. I saw her on her knees up there behind the prison. I heard her agonizing wail once again:

"My poor darling! My poor Francis!"

That last gaze that the boy flashed at me before I slipped the leather flap over his face, haunted me. The demeanor of utter helplessness stirred me as I had never been stirred before. I didn't want to kill him, but automatically my hand reached the switch handle and I turned on the "juice." Before I realized what I had done, the deadly current was zig-zagging through his frail body.

I was immediately convulsed with horror and consciously or unconsciously, I know not which, took my hand off the lever and the roar of the current died away. The doctor's eyes blazed with terror. He came hurrying over to the switch room agitated beyond description.

"My God," he gasped, "what has happened?"

I threw in the switch again, and held it until death came.

There was a smile of peace on the poor kid's face, the same smile he wore before I put the leather flap over his eyes. His head was tilted over on the left shoulder, as though his neck had been broken.

The little wooden crucifix which he held in his right hand was in splinters. Bloody human justice had been satisfied again. Within twenty minutes that night, three unfortunate souls had gone into the unwaking night, and I had earned $450.

As I left the execution chamber I saw Mrs. Calhoun in the Warden's office. I did not enter the office while she was there. I couldn't face that poor woman. I knew what she was suffering, but she didn't know what I was suffering. Nobody knew what I was suffering—nobody but God.

When Mrs. Calhoun left the Warden's office, I entered.

"What's the matter?" the Warden demanded, as he glared at me. "You don't look well."

"I'm not well," I said. "No man could feel well after what I have seen and done tonight."

I told the Warden about my meeting Mrs. Calhoun up there behind the prison. I told him how I felt about executing that boy.

"I feel like a murderer," I said. "But I've murdered my last man. Get a new executioner, for I'm through."

Then he gave me the old line about duty, law and order, and justice—the old bunk about my not being responsible for the deaths of criminals I executed.

"I have heard that before," I replied, "and now I'm through. I'll never forgive myself for killing that Calhoun boy tonight."

I WAS determined to quit. Nothing could shake that determination. It seemed to me that I had to do something to balance the scales with God. For the first time I saw myself as I really was. I agreed with the reporter who had named me "the rat-eyed man of death." Even my wife and children manifested a disposition to shun me. There was no longer any ardor in their embraces. I had become the most lonesome and the most miserable human being alive.

"I've got to do something to balance the scales," I said

to myself, and that thought came back to me again and again, night and day.

Day and night I thought about Mrs. Calhoun and her unfortunate boy. Sleep, wholesome, refreshing sleep, never came to me. The men I had killed were with me all the time. Those men were beyond misery. I was living in the midst of misery.

I started, dumbstruck

Still I went about with an air of bitterly assumed nonchalance. I kept my misery to myself and no man had any intimation from me of the eternal torment that was raging within me. To those who intimated to me that my duties as executioner were inhuman and revolting, I would say:

"I am merely carrying out the sentence of the courts. They are your laws. You make them. When I execute a murderer, I am protecting you. If I don't execute them, somebody else will."

Still I considered myself a murderer, just as much a murderer as the men I executed. I considered the judges and the juries who sent the victims along to me, as murderers. I was part of a bloody drama. Each of us was a part of it.

The morning after I executed Francis Calhoun, I read the newspaper account of the execution. It sickened me. I was alone in the sitting room of my home. My wife and children were out for a walk. The newspaper was lying on the table when I saw it and I felt that my wife had read it and had purposely left it there in such a way that I could not help but see it.

Well, I was so overwhelmed with pity for Mrs. Calhoun and so conscience stricken that I decided to send her the $150 that the State paid me for executing her son. I wanted no part of that money. I wrote the poor woman a letter enclosing my check. I did not say I had killed her boy. I said I had read an account of her boy's ending and had heard that she was poverty stricken and was enclosing my check as a testimonial of my sympathy for her. This check was the forerunner of a tragedy that has left me a heart broken man as you will presently see. I must go back a little, so you will understand.

Jim Shane, the electrician (Shane isn't his real name, which I am concealing out of regard for his family), was my assistant at the Bakerville prison. I had been on friendly terms with Jim for years. While I was trying in every possible way to keep my identity covered, he deliberately circulated the story that I was the executioner at that prison, and as a result my identity became known. Because of this I was ostracised by my friends, and my wife and children suffered. Everybody avoided my children, and my wife and me.

I hated Shane for what he did to me in this, and I obtained satisfaction and revenge of a sort when I framed him and had him dismissed from the employ of the State. It was then that he underbid me for the position of executioner, offering to do the job for $150 per man, when I was receiving $300 per man. Three years had elapsed but I still hated Shane for what he did to me.

In those three years he had turned out to be a rascal. When he was dismissed from the prison he went into the speakeasy game and after that he took up bootlegging. And during those three years he never lost a chance to injure me in any conceivable way he could, and I, in turn, never stopped looking for an opportunity to injure him.

Jim Shane telephoned me the night after young Calhoun's execution.

"I suppose," he said, "that you read that newspaper account of your latest victim last night."

"Too bad," I replied, "that it wasn't you or some of your flesh and blood. I would like nothing better than to execute you, or one of your family."

I can't record all the things he said to me, or all the things that I said to him. They are not fit for publication.

I went to bed that night cursing Jim Shane and wishing him all the sorrow and misery in the world. But I couldn't sleep. Mrs. Calhoun was before me. Her boy Francis was before me. An image of every man I had executed was before me, and there was no rest and no peace for me.

My wife came to my room the next morning. She asked me if I had read the story of the triple execution. I admitted

I had. Then she began to moralize with me. She said I had to do one of two things—either give up the terrible business of executioner, or give up my family. She burst into tears.

"Everybody's talking about you," she said. "The children are snubbed by everybody. I have no friends. They have no friends. Jim Shane has told everybody in town that you have executed over a hundred men and that one of the men, Tom Cassidy, was an innocent man."

She confessed that her love for me was dying slowly but surely. She confessed, and I had observed this, that the children were slowly but surely drifting away from me. Then she told me something about my eldest boy Frank, who was just twenty, which filled me with an insane rage.

"Estelle (my boy's sweetheart) has broken her engagement with Frank," my wife sobbed. "Frank is almost out of his mind over losing her. I saw Estelle today. She said her father asked her to break the engagement. She said her father objected to her marrying the son of an executioner and she intimated that Jim Shane had told her father all about you. I have been miserable for the past three years, Ed. Our children, who are growing into manhood and womanhood, will be left a frightful legacy if you keep on. You simply must quit this terrible business and we've got to pack up and leave this town and go where you are not known—for the sake of our children, if for no other reason."

"I had just about reached that decision," I replied. "God knows I am heartily sick of this business, Fannie, and want to go away where nobody will know me."

My wife was happy when I told her this. My children were happy when she told them that I had quit and that we were going away to where nobody would know that I had been an executioner. But fate and life had something else in store for me. I had left my trail of blood and sorrow along the great road of life and it was destined that I was to partake of that which I had given to others—to the wives, sweethearts and children of the men whom I had sent to the beyond. Life and fate were about to hand to me what I had handed out to others. I had spread misery and now I was about to have it handed to me. The roar and the din of the menacing crescendo of death had never reached my ears, though I had dealt in death for years, but I was to hear it sooner than I expected it!

"Dad, don't do it! . . . Don't! . . . Don't!"

I had, you will recall, told the Warden that I was through acting as executioner, but I hadn't handed my resignation to the Superintendent of Prisons. I intended to do that immediately. I met him two days after the Calhoun execution, and told him I was all through.

"Been seeing more ghosts?" he asked, and laughed at me.

"No," I replied; "but I detest the job now. I don't want it any longer."

"Sure of that, Ed?"

"I was never more sure of anything in my life."

"Well," he went on, "the death house is about empty. There won't be another execution for six months or more. I will consider your decision to resign and in the meantime I will look around for another man. But, old boy," he added as he laid his hand on my shoulder and grinned at me, "I've got a hunch that you'll change your mind. I'll give you an opportunity to reconsider this matter before I officially accept your resignation and hand the job to anybody else."

"I won't change my mind," I assured him; "I'm through."

"We'll see." He continued to (*Continued on page* 58)

"Go Find My

The anguish of this mother bounds. When human moned a mystic, a mir

MY little boy had disappeared. He had not come home from school that noon. Investigation had shown he had left his schoolmates when half way home, to go back after something or other he had forgotten at school. A single pupil there had seen him leave the second time, running. After that he simply disappeared, dropped from sight, so far as we could ascertain.

I was frantic. My husband had been sent for, police notified, the small city put agog over the disappearance. Inquiries were being made everywhere but to no avail. His description was broadcast by newspaper and radio, as well as through the usual police channels. Yet there came no word of my little sonny. I felt that I should go mad before long.

A night, another day, and still another night passed, and yet the little fellow was missing. Sympathetic folks nearly drove me crazy by their mournful shaking of heads. They felt he was dead, or worse. Even Burton, my husband, felt so, too. I could not believe it, somehow. I had no reason to believe otherwise, unless it was a mother's clinging to a vain hope that her son might still live, somehow, somewhere, and be returned to her again safe and sound.

"You!" said Karmahahti to the doctor. . . "You! Explain this if you want to keep yourself out of jail"

But I did feel that if he were dead, I would know it in some manner. I got to thinking about that in the early hours of dawn, when I could not sleep, but lay wide-eyed, staring at the eastern sky. And there came to my mind the memory of Karmahahti whom I had not seen nor heard of since the day he had shown me pictures in the crystal ball. He had said then that if I ever needed his keen powers of divination I might call for him, and he would come to my aid.

If ever I needed help, it was now. Frantically I sent a mental call to him, wherever he might be.

"Karmahahti! Karmahahti! Karmahahti!"

Even that did not satisfy me. I rose and dressed, then went down to the sitting room where once he had sat and given strange demonstration of his power. I sat in the same chair I had used that day, and over and over again, out loud, I called his name.

Regardless of the deep sorrows and griefs of life, the monotonous routine must go onward with as little interruption as possible. Burton went to work, I did dishes, made beds, swept floors, just as I had done when Junior was

Kidnapped Son!"

who lost her son, knew no agencies failed, she sum-acle worker, and — —

By Carol Lansing

"Will he live?" I asked. That was all that mattered to me

playing about. But tears streamed down my face at intervals. The smaller children I sent to an aunt's for the day, to their delight and my temporary relief. And throughout the day I said over and over again: "Karmahahti! Karmahahti!"

It was late that afternoon when an insistent ringing at the door brought me running, fearfully, hopefully. It might mean bad news. It might be some trace had been found of Junior. It was Karmahahti, travel-stained, clothing rumpled and dusty.

"You called me," he asserted at once in a deep throaty voice. I nodded silently, tears still wet upon my face. He looked at me keenly, motioned me inside, and followed at once.

"You began to call me early this morning, at dawn?" he queried as we sat down. Again I nodded. I hardly dared trust my voice as yet.

"I heard," he said. "Just as soon as I could discover from whence came the summons, I quickly caught the train, and have traveled all day to reach you, for there was agony in your call, madame." He leaned forward, interest upon his countenance. "If you will tell me now what you wish, how I can aid you?"

"But your sense of sight is so powerful, Karmahahti," I countered; "do you not know already what is the trouble?" He shook his head gravely.

"No, madame, I do not. I might have discovered, most certainly, but I delve not into that which is not meant for me to look into. If I wished to do so, I could know international secrets, know things that would upset the very world if I chose to disclose my discoveries.

But if I misused my powers, they would very soon depart from me, and I would be shorn of all such power, my children and children's children after me, would lose that power. It is tradition that this force within us must be used rightly, or not at all. I have waited for madame to tell me what she will."

I TOLD him then, my voice choking at times. I told him everything. He had no need to ask me questions. When I finished he sat in deep thought. I dared not move to break the spell that was upon him. In fascination I watched his eyes, saw them widen, saw flecks of gold come and go across them. His hands upon the arms of the chair began to clench and unclench. Beads of sweat stood out upon his forehead.

"Something of the boy's!" Karmahahti requested. His voice came as from a great distance. At first I hardly knew what he meant, then I remembered that mediums often require articles that have been associated with the person with whom they try to get in touch. Quietly I rose, took Junior's little cap from the hall rack, and laid it upon the man's knee. He had gone off in such a hurry that fatal morning that he had forgotten his cap, heedless little fellow. He took the cap between his long, lean brown hands, crushed it, held it to his nostrils, his lips, his ears, and then against his forehead.

What could he do by this—bring back my boy?

After a long time, he sat upright, his eyes impenetrable once more.

"Madame, I can find no trace of your son, which is most strange," he began in a voice which sounded peculiarly tired. I shivered. He went on at once. "He is not dead. Of that I am certain. If he were, there are certain vibrations that I should receive at once. No, he lives. But I should receive some reflection from his mind, drawn from his to mine by the very strength of my own searching, penetrating powers. And I get no return. There is something strange, something diabolical. Tell me, madame, do you know his exact route home from school that he would surely take?"

I did, and told him. He rose.

"THERE is another method I shall now employ," he said. "I shall start from the school as he did, and in an impersonation of the child himself, shall start for home, his home. Perhaps then I shall know what happened to him. Are you good to walk much?"

I assured him I would not tire easily.

"Then if madame will come with me it will help." A creepy sensation shivered over me for a moment. After all, what did I know of this man? It was within possibility that he himself had taken my child! Awful thought!

"Delay not, please, for your thought is discourteous to me who seeks to help you who have called upon the keen perceptions of Karmahahti's power to aid you in a time of distress," he intoned gravely. I felt abashed, ashamed, and getting my coat and hat, announced myself ready to accompany him.

He did not speak until we had nearly reached the school.

"Please to come without word to me unless you see I am in such trance state that I may be in danger of traffic. Then please to guide simply with hand on my arm and the words, 'Karmahahti will come safely with me.' Do not try to turn me from my course. I may travel far. I hope madame will not tire. If I can get track of certain vibratory sensations I can perhaps follow them to some clue which will benefit. But be not too hopeful. Even the mighty Karmahahti can fail with no trail to follow."

Once at the school he clutched the cap very tightly in one hand, and ran down the school steps like a boy. He curbed his steps a trifle to allow me, by hurrying, to keep abreast of him, yet he was still trotting in that peculiar manner of boys who are too impatient to walk. An occasional pedestrian looked at us curiously but it made no difference to me. I could see that he was still only experimenting, for his eyes darted here and there, and once they met mine in a flash of encouragement. We came to the main street, crossed it, and he was still able to beware of traffic.

We turned down a side street which led to that part of the city where we lived. Half way down this street he started to cut across at an angle, when he suddenly stiffened. He threw himself backward, caught himself, and remained so for a moment, back bowed so it was a wonder he kept his balance, a look of horror upon his face. Watching him, I saw his eyes dilate and a terrible feeling of horror transmitted itself to me. I felt cold all over, then suddenly became aware of a thousand sharp, stabbing pains throughout my body and head. A queer sense of stupor settled slowly over me, and I had to exert every ounce of reason to retain my feet and my senses.

"'Something of the boy's!' Karmahahti requested. I remembered that mediums often require articles that have been associated with the person with whom they try to get in touch. Quietly I rose, took Junior's little cap from the hall rack, and laid it upon the man's knees.

"He took the cap between his long, lean brown hands, crushed it, held it to his nostrils, his lips, his ears, and then against his forehead.

"What could he do by this — bring back my boy?"

Karmahahti began to move, slowly at first, then with increasing speed, down the street. I roused sufficiently to keep up with him. I, too, now was possessed with a desire to get somewhere—where, I did not know. But I wanted to hurry. Together then, we hastened along, turned at the first corner, doubled back and headed toward the other side of the city. I did not notice that my husband had passed us in his car, turned about and followed us. Swiftly on and on and on Karmahahti and I walked, straight to the highway that led out of the city toward another, twelve miles further on. I gave no thought to the distance, nor that I had never walked over four miles at a stretch in my life.

BUT here my husband drew along beside us in his car. He stopped, jumped out, and, so he said afterwards, spoke several times before I noticed him. I laid a finger on my lips to enjoin silence. Without definite realization of what I did, I put a hand on Karmahahti's arm, spoke the words, "Karmahahti will come safely with me," and urged him silently into the car, followed him myself and took the driver's place at the wheel. In amazement Burton jumped into the back seat, and only just in time, for the motor was still running, and we were off down the road at once. Karmahahti reached out a hand and laid it upon the wheel but made no effort to help steer.

(*Continued on page* 93)

$10,000 for Ghosts

WE believe we are on the brink of amazing discoveries in the field popularly known as "Psychic Phenomena"—discoveries that can be established and passed to posterity as scientific fact. To this end the publishers of GHOST STORIES Magazine are offering $10,000 in awards, as follows:

1 $8000 award will be paid to the person who produces a visible, disembodied apparition, which can be identified to the satisfaction of the Commission judging the award, as the apparition of a deceased person.

2 $500 shall be given for that physical demonstration, such as spirit photography, levitation, or any other physical manifestation of an unknown force, most convincing to the Commission.

3 $500 shall be given for that mental demonstration such as clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy, automatic writing or any other mental manifestation of an unknown force, most convincing to the Commission.

4 $500 shall be given to the person who satisfies the Commission that a house is haunted.

5 $500 shall be paid to that person demonstrating phenomena in the field known popularly as "psychic phenomena" most convincing to the Commission, not covered in the first four classifications.

Investigation and payments of awards are entrusted to THE UNBIASED COMMISSION FOR PSYCHIC RESEARCH, consisting of a group of men, each an outstanding figure in his chosen profession, including: the Reverend Ralph Welles Keeler, D.D., Chairman; Bernarr Macfadden, noted physical culturist and publisher; Arthur Garfield Hays, distinguished counsellor at law; Howard Thurston, magician; Fulton Oursler, novelist and playwright; Emanuel de Marnay Baruch, M.D.; George Sylvester Viereck, poet and novelist; Joseph Schultz, attorney; H. A. Keller, editor, GHOST STORIES Magazine, Executive Secretary for the Commission.

These awards are open to all—Medium, Psychic Healer, Spiritualist, non-believer and layman.

THE UNBIASED COMMISSION FOR PSYCHIC RESEARCH is sincerely, honestly endeavoring to establish proof of certain so-called psychic phenomena; the Commission is ambitiously trying in a sober, serious, scientific manner to establish new facts and gather first-hand information in the field of Psychic Research.

This offer expires September 30th, 1927.

The Commission reserves the right to extend itself as to membership.

Have you ever seen a ghost? Are you in communication with the dead? Have you any justification for your claim that you can materialize a being from another world? Write—THE UNBIASED COMMISSION FOR PSYCHIC RESEARCH, 1926 Broadway, New York, N. Y., H. A. Keller, Executive Secretary, and due consideration will be given your claim. You have your opportunity through

GHOST STORIES Magazine

The HAUNTED

By
Richard Parry
Told by
Blanche Goodman

What unknown force could blade of steel the agent of

"BEAUTY, isn't it?"

Fielding laid the object he had so carefully unwrapped upon the table before me.

"Ran across it on the East Side." His eyes shone with pleasure at his recent find, and he touched it almost caressingly.

I put my book down and took the "beauty" up for closer inspection. It was a murderous-looking weapon, an antique. As I fingered the ornate scabbard and the cruel blade it had enclosed, a feeling of aversion overcame me. I dropped the thing on the table.

"An heirloom of the Borgias?" My facetious manner was an attempt to disguise my unaccountable repulsion.

"No," replied Fielding as he took it up again. "The Borgias used more subtle weapons. This is simply a member of the dagger family used on the field of battle—a misericorde. The olden warriors were more humane than our modern ones—or more prudent."

Fielding was always voluble on the subject of his hobby, a strange enough one, considering his peace-loving nature. Hand-weapons of any period held his keenest interest.

"THE misericorde," he explained in answer to my questioning look, "belongs to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was not then the fashion to leave one's adversaries disabled on the field. One ended the sufferings of the wounded, and at the same time served one's country's best interests by giving the enemy the *coup de grace*. Look here." And the collector's avid spirit gleamed in his eye. "See these dim figures on the hilt?"

I made out 1410, in Roman numerals.

"This is a find," went on Fielding. "The old chap I bought it from hadn't the remotest idea of its value. He had thrown it over in a corner with a lot of junk that all but hid it from view. But I have sharp eyes." He chuckled like a boy as he said this.

We had knocked about the world together, George Fielding and I, and had finally come to anchor in New York. Here, strangely enough, I had found the quiet and detachment so necessary to my writing.

Fielding was an ideal companion. A man of inherited wealth, his leisure was guaranteed. During my writing bouts, when a play or a novel consumed me, he occupied himself poking in and out of odd corners of the city, or playing the cavalier for a while to some pretty girl who had entangled his roving fancy. When, as now, the fever of work had subsided with me, he was ready to resume our jaunts together. I had, only that day, sent a thick manuscript to my publishers, and as usual, after the let-down, I felt drained, depleted.

Fielding, fresh from a brisk walk in the tingling winter air, regarded me studiously for a moment.

"Dick, come out of this. You look pale and flabby. Join me this evening?" He eyed me eagerly.

I thanked him with a smile as I shook my head. "What I need first of all, is a good night's rest. Tomorrow I'll be all fit and ready to start out with you. I haven't the desire, let alone the energy, to go tonight. I'm not quite up to it."

"All right, old chair-warmer." And he gave my hair an affectionate pull. "Tomorrow, then."

It was eight o'clock when Fielding departed. I decided to read a bit and then take a turn about the block before retiring.

I made myself comfortable in my favorite chair, and took up a book that had just come from the publishers. The pages were still uncut.

I glanced at the table beside me, looking for the ivory paperknife usually there. It was missing—no doubt it was in Fielding's room. We occupied two suites that opened into a common living-room and borrowing was not infrequent.

I was in that state of physical inertia which makes all extra effort an annoyance. I sat there debating whether to rise and hunt for the paper knife or to put the book down.

Suddenly my gaze fell upon the misericorde that lay beside its sheath on the table, just as Fielding had left it earlier in the evening.

I picked it up and set about cutting the leaves of the book. The incongruity of the thing in its present use, struck me with a sense of ironical humor. Just as now, this vicious steel point pushed its way between the printed pages of a romance, so in centuries past it had been forced between the armor-joints of many a brave knight.

I had cut but a few pages when an intense drowsiness possessed me. My eyelids drooped as though weighted with lead. The hand that held the misericorde fell to my lap, slackly grasping the weapon as I slid into the heavy languor of sleep. . . .

Had an instant, or an hour, passed? I do not know. But suddenly I sat bolt upright, my heart pounding with terror. The air of the room seemed to have grown thick, as though filled with dust, and the light on the table was blurred as in a fog.

What was this horrible, intangible presence I felt beside me? I grasped for breath. Was I dreaming or waking?

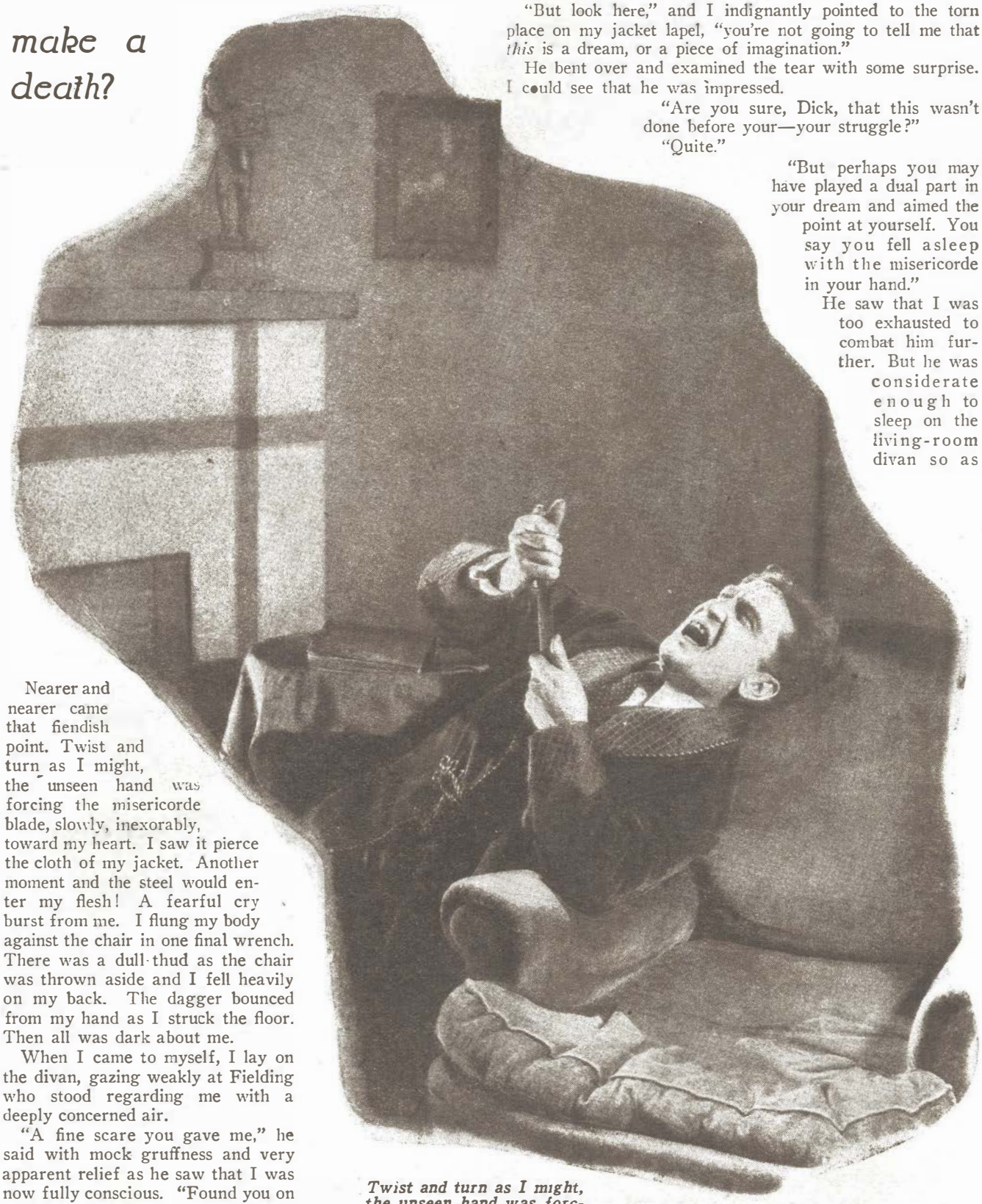
I felt my hair bristle on my neck. A yell of fear rose to my lips and died there in a low gurgle. For, slowly, powerfully, an unseen clammy hand was closing about my fingers, pressing them around the hilt of the misericorde, and holding them there as in a vise.

I PANTED for breath. I slowly struggled to my feet, and put forth all my puny strength in a desperate effort to pull my fingers from the grip of that unseen hand. I pulled, I struggled with short, inarticulate cries against the *thing* whose deadly force pitted itself against my futile resistance.

The room now swam as in a red mist, my labored breath falling upon my ears like a death-rattle. Forced to the floor, I finally drew myself up in a crouching posture, as I pressed backward against the arm of the heavy chair, straining my body frantically this way and that. The point of the misericorde was now only an inch from the lapel of my lounging-jacket. My strength was fast ebbing.

DAGGER

make a death?



Nearer and nearer came that fiendish point. Twist and turn as I might, the unseen hand was forcing the misericorde blade, slowly, inexorably, toward my heart. I saw it pierce the cloth of my jacket. Another moment and the steel would enter my flesh! A fearful cry burst from me. I flung my body against the chair in one final wrench. There was a dull thud as the chair was thrown aside and I fell heavily on my back. The dagger bounced from my hand as I struck the floor. Then all was dark about me.

When I came to myself, I lay on the divan, gazing weakly at Fielding who stood regarding me with a deeply concerned air.

"A fine scare you gave me," he said with mock gruffness and very apparent relief as he saw that I was now fully conscious. "Found you on the floor by that arm chair when I came in, with the misericorde on the carpet beside you."

I smiled wanly.

"I say," ejaculated Fielding, "what the deuce *was* all this?"

For a moment I did not know if the monstrous thing had been a dream or reality. Tired nerves have played some marvelous tricks—and yet—I knew that was no mere dream.

I decided to tell Fielding of the ghastly struggle in which I had taken part.

"You've had a peach of a night-mare," was his laughing comment.

"But look here," and I indignantly pointed to the torn place on my jacket lapel, "you're not going to tell me that *this* is a dream, or a piece of imagination."

He bent over and examined the tear with some surprise. I could see that he was impressed.

"Are you sure, Dick, that this wasn't done before your—your struggle?"

"Quite."

"But perhaps you may have played a dual part in your dream and aimed the point at yourself. You say you fell asleep with the misericorde in your hand."

He saw that I was too exhausted to combat him further. But he was considerate enough to sleep on the living-room divan so as to be within earshot in case I had another "brain-storm," as he called it. We spoke no more of the visitant that night. In a little while I relaxed in a deep and dreamless sleep.

Twist and turn as I might, the unseen hand was forcing the misericorde blade slowly, inexorably, toward my heart!

Next morning at breakfast (*Continued on page* 76)

SPIRIT TALES

Timely Topics of Current Interest

By Count Cagliostro

COMMUNICATION with lately-dead celebrities seems to be getting more fashionable every day. One begins to wonder—to speculate if such communications do not smack more of the press agent than any true occult agency.

It will be remembered that Mr. Frikell predicted several issues back in this magazine that soon after Houdini died, medium after medium would declare they had received messages from him. This prediction has now been fulfilled—a flood of messages is on the way, not one of which carries conviction.

As if this were not enough, Natacha Rambova, the divorced wife of the late Rudolph Valentino, moving picture star, says she is in spirit touch with the cinema actor. At any rate here is what the papers have been saying about it:

"Rudolph Valentino is preparing to continue his career as a screen sheik in the spirit world, according to spiritualist messages which Natacha Rambova, his former wife, says she has received.

"Miss Rambova made the contents of the messages known upon her return from Europe on the *Homeric*.

"'Caruso sings, Wallace Reid plays in the movies and Mme. Sarah Bernhardt enacts some of her famous rôles on the stage of the astral world, her messages from Rudy informed her, Miss Rambova said.

"The communications were revealed through George B. Wehner, a medium of the American Society for Psychical Research, she said. Wehner returned with her on the *Homeric*.

"'Valentino often comes back to the earth,' his former wife said."

AMONG the people of the theater there is a surprisingly large number who believe in the occult, the supernatural, the uncanny. An entire volume might be collected of ghost stories that the editor of this department has heard told by actresses and actors. One of the best of these was the queer affair of the stock company's prompt book. Perhaps you remember the furore it created at the time. If you do not, let that charming woman of the stage, Julia Sanderson, tell you. It happened to her father—and as they say over the radio—Miss Sanderson may now speak for herself:

"It seems such a preposterous story that I never like to tell it, but—well, here goes. You see, it didn't happen to me—it's really my father's story.

"My father is an actor and stage manager and a great deal of his work has been done as stage director for stock companies. Stock companies put on the plays that have already been done in the city theaters and the stage director makes it a rule to follow the original 'business' of the play as closely as possible. For this purpose, prompt books are made up by the original producers and the directors of stock companies have these to go by.

"In them all the 'business'—that is to say, the little things that the actors have to do between the lines—is all plainly indicated. But sometimes the man who gets up the prompt book isn't careful about that and then the stage director has to depend upon his own memory, or, if he hasn't seen the original production, his own invention.

"At the time this occult thing happened, my father was the stage director of a stock company in one of the smaller cities up in New York State. The prompt book of this particular play was very incomplete and had little or none of the 'business' marked in it. He had never seen the original production of the piece and he was pretty well puzzled to know just what ought to be done in certain situations.

"One situation was particularly difficult to work out and he had been thinking about it night and day for nearly a week, and still he hadn't gotten it to suit him. He happened to remember that the man who 'put on' the play originally was an old friend of his. We'll call him John Smith because that wasn't his name. Father had written to Smith asking him to give him some information about the particular scene that was bothering him but had received no reply.

"Indirectly, however, he learned Smith was on a tour in the South. Father didn't know his route, and any way it was too late to write him and get word back in time to do any good. It was Friday night and the play was to be presented on Monday. Father simply couldn't get that scene right and he worried greatly. After the regular performance he returned to his hotel and instead of going to his room he was sitting down in the writing room at one of the desks thinking hard and trying to figure out on a piece of paper just how the scene ought to be played.

"It was quite late—nearly midnight—and there was no one else in the writing room. Suddenly father (this is the way he tells the story himself, you know) looked up across his desk to the one that was backed up against it, and there, to his utter astonishment, he saw Smith looking at him.

"'Why, John, when did you get here?' asked father. And then, without waiting for a reply, being so full of the scene in the play that he wanted to work out, he went right on and asked Smith to tell him about it. And Smith did.

"Father says he talked to him for nearly five minutes and explained all about the situation that had been bothering him. Then suddenly he (Smith) got up and walked toward the door and disappeared without saying good-by or anything.

"Father thought it was very queer and followed him out into the main lobby of the hotel. But Smith had apparently disappeared. Father walked over to the desk and asked the clerk if John Smith was stopping there, and when had he arrived? The clerk looked at his rack and said there was no such man in the hotel. That puzzled father still more, of course. But as the thing that had been bothering him was now clear in his mind, he went upstairs and went to bed and to sleep at once.

"In the morning when he got up and went down to breakfast, he bought a paper as usual and took it in to read while he was drinking his coffee, and there right on the first page, with a big headline, was a story, telegraphed from some place in the South that the night before John Smith—this same John Smith with whom father thought he had talked—had walked off the tail end of a sleeping car on a train going at a rapid rate and had been picked up dead by the train hands who went back to look for him.

"The time of the accident as it was given in the paper was just about the time, as nearly as father could reckon it, that he had seen and talked to Smith there in the writing room of the hotel, hundreds of miles away from the place where he had been killed."

THE recent furore with regard to the alleged communications with Rudolph Valentino and with Harry Houdini, before referred to, must be very largely discounted by thinking people.

(*Continued on page* 54)

Here is the real truth about the sex question!

THIS is an age of plain thinking and frank speech. No longer can a big, vital problem like the sex question be hidden away as a thing to be ashamed of. People are demanding the truth about these things.

And so Bernarr Macfadden has lifted the veil. He has told the truth about mankind's most vital problem in a frank, straight-from-the-shoulder style that will appeal to every man who reads his remarkable book.

MEN—

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8—Marital Mistakes and Excesses
9—Regulating Marital Intimacies
10—Should Husband and Wife Occupy Separate Beds?
11—Conserving Love—The Basis of Marital Happiness
12—Should Husbands be Present at Childbirth?
13—Are Children Always Desirable?
14—The Crime of Abortion
15—Divorce Physiologically Considered
16—Can a Wrecked Marriage Be Reclaimed?
17—The Erring Wife
18—Jealousy—the Green-Eyed Monster
19—Quarreling and Making Up
20—Sowing Wild Oats
21—How Virility is Destroyed
22—The Truth About Masturbation
23—Seminal Losses
24—The Plain Facts About Varicocele
25—The Troublesome Prostate Gland
26—Impotence and Allied Sexual Weaknesses
27—Sterility
28—How to Build Virility
29—Exercises for Building Virility
30—Foods that Help to Build Virile Stamina
31—Diseases of Men — Their Home Treatment
32—The Prevention of Venereal Disease
33—Various Problems of Young Men

MANHOOD and MARRIAGE

by Bernarr Macfadden

THIS book is a fearless, ringing challenge to prudery and ignorance. It contains the fruits of Bernarr Macfadden's life long study of one of the biggest problems confronting the young manhood of the world. In writing it he has dared condemnation to tell people what they really needed to know about themselves.

He has had to surmount extraordinary difficulties in the preparation of the book. Many of the topics discussed had never before appeared in a book intended for popular consumption.

But the truth is mighty! It can neither be ignored nor suppressed. There was an overwhelming need and demand for a fearless, plainspeaking book on sexology. The wall of ignorance that was wrecking millions of lives must be broken down.

The book was written, published and placed on sale. Today in tens of thousands of homes this great work is one of the chief factors in promoting health, strength and happiness.

The Author's Message

"Manhood of a superior degree is of truly extraordinary value. It is an asset beyond price. Thousands of young men, and those that are not young, can be wonderfully benefited by carefully following the instructions to be found in the pages of this volume. May it go out and carry its important truths to every human soul struggling for the light so sorely needed amid the pitfalls of life's pathway."

Bernarr Macfadden

A book that solves the vital problems of men

"MANHOOD AND MARRIAGE" enters the sanctuary of the most sacred phases of your inner life. It grips you with suggestions that are personal and confidential. It furnishes definite and practical information on vital subjects, pure in themselves, that are frequently surrounded with vulgar mystery.

The problems of men frequently assume tremendous importance. They often become the source of worries that ultimately assume a tragical nature. And the need for the answer to the query, "What shall I do?" often grips the victim with terrifying intensity. It is well, therefore, that conditions and problems of this sort should be clearly and emphatically presented, for the outcome may mean success or failure, health or disease, or even life or death.

This book solves practically and definitely some of the most tremendously vital problems that confront the manhood of today. It talks plainly. It conveys invaluable body-developing, mind and moral-building, life-saving truth. It will enlighten you as no other book has ever done on these important vital topics. It goes right at the "heart" of the needs of men of today. Whether married or single, you will find this book a proverbial gold mine in information that is needed every day of your life.

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Whenever a celebrity dies there is the subsequent history—messages from beyond the grave.

It has been like that for a long time.

In 1910, the "spirit" of Frank R. Stockton began to write stories through a medium, a Miss Etta de Camp. Miss de Camp published the first of these post-mortem stories in 1912 and produced seven in all. For some time subsequently Miss de Camp, who lived in Schenectady, New York, was prevented by business engagements from taking up her strange literary labors, but in May of 1913 began again. Then Stockton, she declared, started to write through her a short story entitled *Brewster's Bargains*. Again there were interruptions, but when she resumed, in October, 1914, she learned that the war had so seriously disturbed the other world that further authorship was out of the question.

Below is part of a "message" which Miss de Camp says she received from Stockton on October 12, 1914:

"While I am glad that you are able to go on with our work again, your not being able to do so for some time has not mattered so much as it might, because of conditions since our last writing.

"Things here have been trying to one's heart and sympathies. Fearful as war is on your plane, few realize the effect of it on this. The scenes are beyond description, as thousands of souls are hurled unprepared into this condition, suffering from the battle they still believe to be in progress. For, not knowing they have passed through the change called death, they think they are still alive. Then confusion of mind follows, when they realize where they are, and they become grief-stricken over the thought of loved ones left at home.

"And so it has taken all of us here on this plane to minister to them the best we can. My time has been so taken up with this work that I have given no thought to my own affairs."

The next day, says the medium, the following "message" was received from the same source:

"The appalling conditions here, due to the equally appalling conditions on your plane, are beyond description. Thousands of shrieking, terrified men, thrown suddenly into this condition, maddened by the confusion and lust of battle, and arriving here without being conscious of the change, still strike to kill all of the enemy in sight. This first brings them to a realization of something strange, because the sabre no longer cuts nor does the stab of the bayonet wound.

"We who look on wait until this confusion of mind occurs. Then we strive to quell, to soothe, to show them how useless it is to fight on. We explain what seems impossible to them at first—that they have passed from the earth plane to this. Attempts to pacify them in their grief over leaving loved ones behind awaken all our sympathies, for we too have only recently become reconciled to that same sorrow ourselves."

A New York clubwoman asserts that she received the following communication from W. T. Stead, the noted English editor and author, who was lost in the wreck of the *Titanic*:

"When these victims of man's inhumanity to man arrive, they do not realize the change which has come so suddenly, and make efforts to keep on slaying each other. Only when they find the effort to destroy is unavailing do they cease. Then they are bewildered and alarmed. When they learn the truth of the matter they are most unhappy, being unfitted for life eternal, and filled with anger and hatred, zeal for killing and violence.

"When these emotions have subsided they remember those left behind and sorrow takes possession of them. When this state is reached, our ministry begins. We make an effort to explain the conditions here and teach how life may be adjusted. With the thousands who have passed in these last months you can see that we have worked diligently."

Another message later read: "It is impossible to break through the whirlpool of wild and warring vibrations which surcharge the ether (over Europe). Will you please give this message to my daughter? I have been unable to meet with her as often as I would like."

The New York medium communicated to Miss Stead in England, her late father's message, and received from her this message:

"I have not been having many communications from my father since the war. He says the whirl is so tremendous near the earth that to communicate is difficult. He tells me he is very busy influencing and helping, and is organizing bands of helpers for those thrust so suddenly over from the battle field."

IN the extraordinary series of "letters" from the world beyond the grave alleged to have been communicated by the late Doctor Wadsworth Cecil Tuck, of Boston, through a spiritualistic medium to his mother, Doctor Lucy W. Tuck, and privately published in Boston during the war under the title *Interwoven*, are several passages describing the condition of spirits arriving on the farther shore whose physical bodies met death in war or by accident.

No claim is made that these "letters" are authentic communications, but they are obviously put forth in good faith and with the consent of Doctor Lucy Tuck, who is a reputable woman physician of Boston. Anyway they are of curious interest.

Doctor Tuck had just been graduated from the Harvard Medical School and was house physician in the Boston City Hospital at his death in 1888. He writes in these "letters" of how he was soon given a place among the corps of spirit physicians whose work it is to revive into new consciousness the frail, vaporous shapes that pass from the earth at death to the spirit border land.

They are "a mass of vaporish substances that emits certain flames or coruscations of light like glow worms, according to their color. They shape quickly or lie in embryo." The process of rebirth depends on the soul's life on earth. Some are "so trailed in with odd streaks of belief and melancholy and fear and sin that it sometimes takes two days to turn the substance into shape."

Doctor Tuck asserts in these letters that the spirit permeates the whole physical body and that soul resuscitation is difficult when the limbs or organs have been injured. But can this be known definitely?

Obviously there is no more reason to believe these statements than there is to credit the cheap absurdities which the former Mrs. Valentino carried in her hands when she met the reporters.

FOLLOWERS of the Bible have always known that it condemns occultism, but many have often asked for specific information. Here is the passage in the Bible that is most often and most solemnly quoted in this connection:

Deuteronomy, Chapter 18, verses 10 to 14.

10. There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.

11. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee.

13. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

14. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee to do so.

SOME time ago it was pointed out in this magazine that as fast as one phase of spirit photography was exposed as fraudulent, another new mystery appeared which seemed even more difficult to explain.

Some recent experiments have come to light in this particular that seem to us of extraordinary interest:

The late Professor Jacob Hemmuller, of Leipzig, conducted experiments to determine the natural causes for the strange effects sometimes obtained upon photographic plates. Results have proved that photographic plates in various stages of chemical development are susceptible to electrical vibrations, as well as actinic light.

For instance, it was found that a photographic plate of the very ordinary kind, unexposed to light impressions, would be affected by the high frequency vibration of the wireless spark-gap or aerial, while the plate was wet in the developing bath composed of hydroquinone and its assistant chemicals. The vibrations referred to were being discharged within a mile or two of the dark room, and caused various changes in the chemical development of the silver, ranging in intensity according to the "tune" of the vibrations and their periods of duration. The objective effect was usually a combination of curves, spirals and definite spots of light and shadows, easily printed upon photographic paper.

Such experiments led to those which any photographer can make in this manner. After the unexposed plate is wet with the developer it should be held in the left hand, the feet of the photographer being grounded through either dampness or a metal plate attached to the water pipes. Now let the photographer, or someone else, touch to the corner of the wet plate an electric wire from dry or storage bat-

teries, giving to the plate only the positive current. After a two seconds' influence by the current the plate may be developed, and upon its film will be seen flowers, scrolls, designs, seeming faces, scenes, et cetera, in varying intensity, and very often in beautiful colors. After the plate is fixed it may be printed as usual, and, while the colors will not show, the phantom impressions caused by the current can be interpreted by the seekers for spiritual phenomena as "spirit pictures," or most anything else. It all depends upon the reason for the convictions of the experimenter.

Just why electrical currents should affect a partially developed, unexposed plate, and why only certain strengths of current or definitely tuned wireless vibrations cause such designs, has not been learned, although research workers are giving the matter considerable thought. This may explain many of the peculiar troubles which all photographers have experienced during the past few years since the air—the ether—has become so heavily charged with electricity.

He Refused to Stay Dead

(*Continued from page 27*)

and he scrambled up from among the rushes strewing the floor and left the hall much more rapidly than he had entered. I heard his voice raised against the tumult of wind and rain. To enforce his summons, I seized a great war-horn and blew blast after blast upon it. Then I tore out of the building and raced down to the beach where presently I was joined by my men, serfs and freedmen together.

Black squalls and a torrential downpour of rain made sight a difficult matter, but dimly through the murk we could at intervals catch glimpses of the doomed stranger. A long, low ship she was, slender, evidently built for speed. She showed the ragged stumps of two masts. Her prow bore no effigy of dragon nor of serpent, which fact we all noted with relief. At least, she was not a long-ship of the dread Northmen.

IN that frightful gale time seemed to stand still. I had no idea how long we watched that doomed ship striving to claw off-shore and win its way back to open sea again, but suddenly the end came. A black squall, worse than any so far, rushed landward—there was an interval during which the keenest eyes lost all sight of her—then as the light, feeble enough at best of times, grew a trifle brighter—behold! there was no ship struggling upon the tumultuous waters.

Some of my followers cursed bitterly because the sea-demons had robbed them of all hopes of flotsam and jetsam; but I cursed them in turn for their heartlessness. But in the midst of it all, I saw a gleam of white flesh, an arm, momentarily revealed in the surf.

"One lives," I shouted, and dashed into the boiling, roaring waves that thundered on our rocky strand. To his credit be it said, that same serf who had brought me the tidings of the wreck about to take place, and whom I had stricken to the floor, took to the water only a pace behind me. Later, I remember, I rewarded him for that bit of loyal service by giving him his freedom, and a hide of land to boot.

Had it not been for his help, I would never have won to the kindly land again. Undertows dragged at me, sand and pebbles slipped and rolled beneath my feet, foam and spray stung my eyes, blinding me; yet somehow I managed to grasp that which I knew by sense of touch alone to be a woman—a woman, and still alive, although well-nigh sped.

Hardly had I seized her when two great hands clamped fast hold upon me, and that shock-head serf bawled in my ear:

"There be no more—back to land, Master!"

He spoke truly enough. No other body, living nor dead, came ashore, then or later. Nor was any wreckage ever picked up from that lost ship, although I sent men up and down the coast for half a day's journey, searching.

In my arms I bore her to the great hall, where I laid her down upon the wide bench before the bright fire in the broad, deep hearth-place. Then, and only then, did I observe that she was young, also very fair to look upon, despite the cruel buffeting she had endured from storm and wind and wave.

I called the women of the household to attend to her needs and comfort. Late that night one of them reported to me that the stranger-woman slept, but had first spoken, briefly, in a language none of the women could understand.

For that matter, neither then nor ever could any be found who could understand her musical speech, which sounded to our ears more like singing. But, she, being quicker of wit than we dull Saxons, gradually mastered our rough tongue. "Edwina," she named herself; daughter of an Arab *rais,* or ship-captain. And many were the strange tales she told—tales of her own land, and of other lands and of races of men about whom nor I nor any I knew, ever had heard. . . .

THEN my dream changed.

I was conscious that a considerable lapse of time had transpired. The sea-waif, Edwina, had grown more beautiful with returned health and strength. She was given to practices that had already caused the members of my household to murmur that she was a witch. Much she consorted with an old woman, one Elfgiva, who was, all knew, still a worshipper of the old gods—and from that same Elfgiva, most assuredly, Edwina learned nothing good.

Yet, in my dream, I loved that dark-eyed maiden from the seas; and, although by our Saxon law, what I had torn from the sea was mine, I would in no wise constrain her. Wherefore, instead, I wooed her and, later, wed her. The clergyman who wed us bestowed upon her by my wish and her consent the good old Saxon name of Alrica, which name had been well and honorably borne by my mother in her time. . . .

So my dream ended.

At breakfast the morning following my glimpse into my forgotten past, I greeted my wife half seriously, half jestingly with:

"Edwina—Alrica—which are you? Are you Arab—or Saxon—or English?"

She stared at me, amazement writ plainly on her flawless features, and in her darkly luminous eyes a look of dawning comprehension.

So, you know! What do you know?" she queried earnestly.

In detail I related my dream, and she followed me attentively.

"It makes me very happy—that you do know," she stated gravely. "All this I have known for a long while; even before we were married—in the twentieth century. But, oddly enough, just as I ceased being Edwina and became Alrica, there my knowledge ends; nor can I remember what came after——"

"Unless the record of Rolf the friar is at fault or mis-states," I said, "we know fairly well what came after. You were kidnapped by this Thorulf the Sword-Hand and——"

"B-r-r-r!" she retorted. "I am glad I cannot remember, if that's the case. Let us forget that part, Eric. Let the dead past remain buried!"

It would have been well for us both had we done that very thing, literally! But curiosity, that fatal curse of mankind, drove us on; and—as I now think—something else, a terrible mind, unhuman, outside the pale of kindly humanity, was working on our minds for purposes unholy—evil purposes that had held to one fixed course throughout a thousand years and more. The demoniac mind of that fierce Northman, Thorulf Sword-Hand, who, according to the scroll of the chaplain, Rolf, had become a Troll—and who, slain, had refused to stay dead, but whose unhallowed body could in no manner pass the magic symbol that held him prisoner; while at the same time, his revengeful ghost could not get back to its material frame——

It all sounds mad enough, I know, but—let the ensuing events tell their own story:

THAT door was, as John the gardener had stated, almost as hard as iron. The wood, buried and sealed from air throughout all the long centuries, had slowly seasoned instead of rotting. Furthermore, it was built of thick, square-hewn beams fully nine inches through. In its center was a plate of blackened silver which I rubbed with dirt until it shone a trifle brighter. Edwina scrutinized it closely.

"Oh, look, Eric!" she exclaimed. "The old monk was no mere dabbler in magic! It is the seal of Suleiman the Wise—that same seal with which the great King of old bound the races of the Djinns."

And a moment later:

"Oh, bother! That silver plate is fastened squarely over a lot of the words branded on the door. Eric, those characters are Norse runes; the old, old magic letters and words. I cannot read them all, but I can read enough . . . I wish that plate did not cover so many of them."

To please her, before she was aware of my intention, I drove the sharp edge of a spade under one corner of the square silver plate, and wrenched. It came partially loose and sagged askew, held by one spike only. I grasped it and tore it completely free. Edwina emitted a warning cry.

"Stop! It is the Seal of Sulieman! It may not be tampered with, lightly. You are too bold, Eric."

"Nonsense!" I smiled. "What do you suppose I care about a few queer triangles engraved on a silver plate—if its removal pleasures you?"

But the smile died out on my lips, even as I spoke. A ghastly chill pervaded the air. Even though the sun shone so brightly a moment before, somehow the light had become awesomely dulled, as when an eclipse occurs. A feeling of such horror as never until then had I known, not in all my war experience, surged through me; and, to crown that horror—through the great oaken door I thought there came the sound of low, rumbling, mocking laughter. We stood appalled, staring at each other. Then with an effort I regained my self-control.

"Clever grave-robbers we are," I jeered, humorously. "This is the Twentieth Century, the era of materialism, and in broad daylight—"

I swung up a sharp, heavy axe and attacked that massive door at one edge. Where, as we both noted, was something very like a great lock of greenish metal that was unquestionably formed of hammered bronze. I was no weakling, yet before I had chopped all around that lock it was growing dusk. And I had started on it considerably before noon. I suppose I should have become exhausted by my exertions long before I finished the job, but instead, a strength almost superhuman seemed to possess me. It was precisely as if I were anxious to get within for some motive far above that of mere curiosity—almost as though I had an appointment with that which dwelt within.

Edwina suggested that I stop, and resume once again the next day, but that suggestion I flatly vetoed.

"By no means will I stop now!" I exclaimed emphatically. "It will be dark inside there at any time of day or night. We'll go and refresh ourselves with supper, get flashlights, and I at least will come back. I've just gotten fairly started, and things will become interesting from now on."

But after all, it was nearly midnight before the last barrier was down and our way cleared. Edwina had asserted that she would stay with me to the end of the adventure, and I had not the heart to make her return to the castle. So, together, each holding a flashlight, we entered, and looked about us cautiously.

In a way, it was an impressive sight we gazed upon. Or, rather, it must have been so when first that Norse sea-thief was walled within the tomb.

Picture to yourself a thick oak table some nine feet long and over four feet broad. At the head of the table, facing the doorway, was placed a great chair, also of hewn oak, and seated therein——

He had been a veritable giant in his day, and seemed but little shrunken, despite the ages since he had departed this life. On his head was a helm of metal, from the sides of which, just above his temples, there curved upwards like a crescent moon, two horns, and from the dull yellow gleams they gave off, they were wrought from gold.

IN his left hand he held an enormous drinking cup of gold, gem-encrusted; but in his right hand he grasped the thick handle of a huge long-sword that lay extended on the table, point toward the door.

His shoulders and his torso were covered with chainmail; but then, as we first viewed him, seated, we could not see his body at all. A bristling, matted beard, covered most of his face.

"Was he embalmed, then? And if not, why has he not crumbled to dust long ago?" I said, breaking the dead silence in which Edwina and I had been staring at this strange and awful relic of a long-forgotten age.

She shuddered. "I do not think the Northmen understood the art of embalming. Oh, Eric, it's too terrible! Let us go, quickly. I am afraid. It kept itself—in preservation—for a time at least—— Rolf the friar did well to warn—— *That* is why he made exorcisms and placed the seal of the Wise King—— Oh, come away, Eric before it is too late! Oh, Eric, Eric—*it—is—too late—now!*"

Her voice rose gradually to a horrified shriek; she ended on a gurgling, choked note, sighed, and, smitten into merciful coma by sheer terror, Edwina crumpled in a tumbled heap to the floor.

I well nigh joined her! Man though I was, soldier though I had been, materialist as I had always held myself, I, too, very nearly screamed at what followed. The closed eyes had slowly opened. The wide, ugly mouth opened cavernously in an amazing yawn, disclosing blackened tushes more like those of a wild boar than anything resembling human teeth.

A low chuckle sounded through the charnel-chamber. Then, haltingly, as one renewing acquaintance with a long-disused tongue, the hideous Troll-thing spoke in a voice whose every tone sounded in my ears precisely as if filtering through glue or slimy ooze.

"What? After all these ages? It is Eric the Falcon—the Bright Falcon of those accursed dogs of Saxons—come again to earth? Eric—whom long ago I slew, taking his lands and his very beautiful wife for my own! And now Eric came again, and opened for my spirit the way back to my body—— Ho! a rare jest, Saxon dog! Thine was the hand that pulled away that silver plate I dared not pass! Great haste was thine, fool, to enter my barrow and bring back to me that same fair woman——

"Why, Saxon, it is kind of thee! Long have I waited. Yet thou hast come—even as that Devil-goddess I visited in Hela's Halls swore to my raging soul—she swore, too, that if I would yield her reverence and service I should await thy coming throughout the ages, still in mine own body. Saxon, I claim my bride! Get thee hence, swineherd!"

Oh, now I knew why I had been so determined to cut through that door. That *I* which is greater than I, knew that the Troll-thing dwelt therein, and had a heavy score to settle. . . . I heard my own voice, hoarse with wrath, speaking in frenzied words that came from I knew not where.

"Thorulf Sword-hand! Sea-thief, murderer, ravisher in life! And in death, Troll, Vampyr—I, Eric of Falconwold, name thee *Niddering*——"

But at that word, the worst that could possibly be applied to a Northman, the Troll, who had risen, slowly, lumberingly, from his great chair and taken his first stride towards me, stopped short.

"Niddering? A coward? I?" His gluey tones held a note of unbelief, incredulity, as though he could no longer trust his hearing.

"Aye, Niddering! *Thorulf Niddering,"* I cried ferociously, almost into his matted beard. "Niddering—and worse! Art armed, hast a long-sword, and I am empty-handed! Art clad in armor, and I in cloth, yet thou dost threaten, bid me hence! Thou, Thorulf Niddering, dare not fight me, whom once thou didst slay, with weapons! Had I but a knife, I'd send thee yelling with fear, back to that Devil-goddess who rules in Hela's Halls with a fine tale——"

HE heard me out, standing motionless, his ugly head nodding reflectively; while in his vampyr eyes the hell-lights flickered and flared.

"Behind my chair—a battle-axe," he growled. "It is a good axe. Long ago I took it from a Christ's-man. I will not touch it—but thou—get it, Saxon! I will fight thee once again—for her," and he pointed, leering evilly, at Edwina, lying there so still and white.

For a single second I mistrusted—and why not? It was no man, but a demon I stood facing. That great brand, his long-sword! But as if reading my thought, he lowered the point to the floor and folded his huge hands on the ball-shaped pommel. I knew I must chance it—for Edwina's sake.

In a single bound I was past him, had grasped the axe from where it leaned against his chair. I whirled about, leapt between him and my unconscious woman.

"Now—Sea-thief, Troll, Vampyr," I shouted, defiant.

"Harsh names, Saxon," he grumbled, "after I gave thee a good axe!"

My flashlight I had placed on the table, so its rays would be cast on us as we stood. Edwina's had slipped beneath her when she fell. There was a gruesome, greenish-blue half-light that pervaded all the charnel-chamber; I know not whence it sprang. But in that weird light I could see the Troll-thing's eyes shine lurid as he lashed out at me with his ponderous brand. I parried it easily with the axe-head, for as yet Thorulf's arms were awkward and stiff, as well they might be.

Then began, full-swing, one of the

strangest battles ever fought—a battle between man the soul-bearer, and that which had lost its soul's heritage, becoming one of the horrible Un-dead—one who, slain, had sold his right to dwell in Valhalla for revenge and a life that was not life! And the prize of that fierce conflict between us twain was the body, and soul, of her who lay there so motionless, so waxy-white that I surely deemed her dead, and silently thanked God that such was the case. For *it* could then possess only the inanimate body—yet from that horror, too, I must save her!

Once that thick voice rumbled *"Thor Hulf!"* The old, wild, Northman battle-cry! And I retorted "God's Help!" Then jeered the Thing with biting scorn.

"Thor will never heed thee, Troll," I mocked. "Thor sits in Valhalla with the honorable brave, and holds no traffic with Hela's brood!" And thereafter we fought in a grim silence.

Quicker of foot I was, but the Troll had advantage of reach both of arm and with weapon. Wherefore he did most of the attacking, while I could but parry the sweeps of the enormous long-sword, dodge and swerve, and, at rare intervals, swing a futile blow at his arm with the heavy, double-bladed axe.

Where the thought came from, I have no means of knowing, but into my mind leaped, full-born, the certitude that could I once get the Thing out of his burial-mound and into the open, where was greater room, I might yet have a chance.

To that end I used all the craftiness I could command. Feinting, swerving, leaping backward and ever sidewise, I worked toward the entrance. Somehow, as by mutual consent, unspoken but understood, we both avoided trampling on Edwina as we fought past where she lay. . . .

We were outside! A thunderstorm was raging, and in my soul I thanked Heaven for it. The rain refreshed me, and I had the kindly lightning to see by. It was Nature's own light, and not that greenish-blue hell-light that shone, unnatural, within the charnel-chamber.

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A wailing yell that turned me sick to hear—and the Troll threw wide its arms, crashed backward, lay prone and forever still! I scrambled to my feet, seized the axe I had let fall, ran to the monster, whirled the axe aloft to behead—but there was no need.

Even as I looked, the Thing began to crumble into dust. Aye, even the bronze and leather, the great long-sword, and, likewise, the horn-hafted battle-axe I was holding, slowly but surely disintegrated! There was no longer a hell-preserved body

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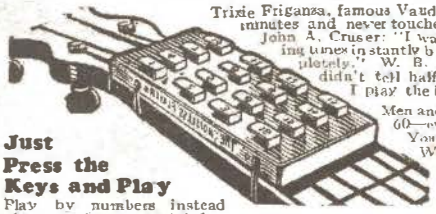

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—only a gleaming skeleton, gigantic, white in the lightning's flare. Then that, too, dissolved into a soft paste from the falling rain. I saw a shine of metal where the head had lain on the ground. I picked it up——

God's help—and His help is very potent!

Falling, I had grasped and flung at the Troll the silver plate which the monk of old, Rolf, had fastened to the door of the barrow! The dark hell-charm that had preserved that Troll-Thing throughout the ages, was not proof against the White Magic of Rolf, servant of the powers of light. His silver seal had done that which not human arm nor heavy battle-axe had availed to achieve.

I crept within that accursed charnel-house, and, weeping and wailing like a frightened child, I sought and found the still form of my beloved. Stumbling through the storm, I bore her to the castle. The dawn was breaking.

Then—I collapsed.

EDWINA recovered consciousness shortly after the noon of the third day following. Her hair is as white as mine, but her beauty is unimpaired. She did not see what happened after the Thing opened those eyes of red fire.

She was badly shocked at my aspect when she beheld me, as I was also when first I looked at myself in a pier-glass, after I'd somewhat recovered from my collapse.

Only once did she seek to question me. We were idly sunning ourselves on a bench in the garden at the time, and she asked, a trifle listlessly:

"Eric, what occurred? Did Thorulf——"

But I looked her squarely in the eyes and—lied!

"Oh, Thorulf crumbled into dust shortly after you fainted. Ask no more, Edwina."

I had the burial-mound blown up with high explosives. Specialists assure me that I may eventually recover wholly from—whatever it is that has made me as I am. But they are badly puzzled by my case, for I tell them nothing.

Edwina promised to ask no more questions. She has kept her word; yet, woman-like, she has very nearly violated it.

Yesterday she slipped her hand in mine as we walked, saying:

"Eric, though my body lay in a swoon—yet I somehow know and remember all that happened! I think—Eric—that the soul—never loses—consciousness."

Revelations of an Executioner

(*Continued from page* 45)

grin at me. "We'll see, Ed. You're a good man and I don't want to lose you."

"Get Jim Shane," I told him; "he'll make you a good executioner."

"No," the "Super" replied, "Shane wouldn't do. This job calls for a man with an unblemished reputation, and Shane's reputation is by no means good since he got out of the employ of the State. No, Shane wouldn't do."

I laughed at his remark about the necessity of an executioner having an "unblemished reputation."

"An executioner must have an unblemished reputation?" I mused. "God, but that's funny! A man who deals in heartlessness and death and whose hands are stained with the blood of his fellowmen, must have a good reputation? That's good!"

JIM SHANE, the bootlegger, couldn't measure up to the requirements of an executioner. I got no kick out of that, I assure you! In the eyes of the rank and file of mankind Jim Shane was a more desirable companion than I. He had friends. I was friendless. There were men and women who would shake his hand, and break bread with him, but there wasn't a man or woman in the world who would shake hands with me, or break bread with me! I killed to protect Society, and Society shunned me. I was considered a monstrous man, a man to be avoided.

Now I can go back to the tragedy to which I have already referred. I sent Mrs. Calhoun the check for $150, my fee for executing her poor son. Within a few days there came a letter from her, thanking me. I wish I had never read that letter. Among other things she wrote me:

> My Francis was not a bad boy at heart. He never talked back to me, or abused me. He was a good boy at heart. I guess it was God's will that he had to die, and I know that God will have mercy on his soul, for he was a good boy to me. I am ever so thankful to you for sending me all that money. Thank God there are some good hearted men in the world, and I will pray that God will reward you for helping me, Mr. Huberston. May God bless you.

"I killed her boy," I mused, "and yet she calls me a good hearted man and hopes that God will bless me. Poor woman! What would she say if she knew?"

The day after I received that letter, the tragedy arrived. My wife came home in a hysterical condition, screaming at the top of her voice. I heard her long before I saw her, and I sensed that something was terribly wrong. She came dashing into the house with a paper in her hand:

"Oh, Ed," she screamed, "read this."

She handed me the paper. My eyes caught a flaring headline in the paper. In big, black, heart-burning type I read:

> A conscience-stricken executioner gives his death house fee to mother of son he executed.

It was what a newspaper man would call "a bang-up story." It pointed out that I was the father of six children and it speculated on the motives which prompted me to send the grief-stricken mother my "death house fee." There were comments about other executions I had staged, and comments about how I was shunned by everybody and how my children were ostracized socially. I was "a lonely man who traveled a lone trail."

FOR a moment I was puzzled as to how the matter of my sending the check to Mrs. Calhoun had got out. Puzzled for a moment, and that was all. The scheme loomed up before me crystal clear. A moment's sober reflection gave me the answer. Jim Shane's daughter worked in the bank. The leak, obviously, came through her. She told her father. Her father saw another excellent opportunity to stab me again. He gave the story to the newspapers; that is, he had given it to his prospective son-in-law, a newspaper man, who was engaged to his daughter.

It was all, I repeat, clear as could be. Jim Shane and his daughter originated this exposé about my sending the check to Mrs. Calhoun. That was perfectly evident. No other explanation was possible because Mrs. Calhoun didn't know that I had executed her son. She had never known me, had never heard of me before she received the letter with my check enclosed. However, I was determined to investigate, and I was determined to make trouble for Jim Shane and his daughter. I went to the president of the bank and talked to him about giving newspapers confidential information relating to his clients. He was disposed to entertain the idea that the leak hadn't come from his organization. But when I showed him Mrs. Calhoun's letter to me, and gave him a word-picture of my relationship with Jim Shane, he immediately recognized the fact that Shane's daughter was at the bottom of the nasty piece of business—whereupon he called her into his office for an examination.

She admitted that she had told her father about the check and that her father had given the story to her fiancé. She knew, she said, from the newspapers, that Mrs. Calhoun was the mother of the boy I had executed. The president discharged her on the spot.

But I was not finished with Jim Shane, or his family. I was determined to make him and his family suffer, as he had made me and mine suffer. The dismissal of his daughter from the bank didn't appease my appetite for revenge—it merely intensified it.

"I'll never quit," I thought, "until I have broken him as he has broken me."

My boy, Frank, didn't sympathize with my plans. He thought it best to let the matter die a natural death.

"Forget about it, Pop," he said. "You've brought all this trouble on yourself, and on us. Let's forget it, and get away where nobody will ever know that you've been an executioner. What good will it do you to get even with Jim Shane? If you hurt him, you hurt innocent people—his wife and his children. Let's get away from this part of the

strangest battles ever fought—a battle between man the soul-bearer, and that which had lost its soul's heritage, becoming one of the horrible Un-dead—one who, slain, had sold his right to dwell in Valhalla for revenge and a life that was not life! And the prize of that fierce conflict between us twain was the body, and soul, of her who lay there so motionless, so waxy-white that I surely deemed her dead, and silently thanked God that such was the case. For *it* could then possess only the inanimate body—yet from that horror, too, I must save her!

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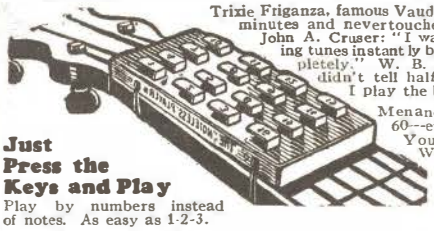

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—only a gleaming skeleton, gigantic, white in the lightning's flare. Then that, too, dissolved into a soft paste from the falling rain. I saw a shine of metal where the head had lain on the ground. I picked it up——

God's help—and His help is very potent!

Falling, I had grasped and flung at the Troll the silver plate which the monk of old, Rolf, had fastened to the door of the barrow! The dark hell-charm that had preserved that Troll-Thing throughout the ages, was not proof against the White Magic of Rolf, servant of the powers of light. His silver seal had done that which not human arm nor heavy battle-axe had availed to achieve.

I crept within that accursed charnel-house, and, weeping and wailing like a frightened child, I sought and found the still form of my beloved. Stumbling through the storm, I bore her to the castle. The dawn was breaking.

Then—I collapsed.

EDWINA recovered consciousness shortly after the noon of the third day following. Her hair is as white as mine, but her beauty is unimpaired. She did not see what happened after the Thing opened those eyes of red fire.

She was badly shocked at my aspect when she beheld me, as I was also when first I looked at myself in a pier-glass, after I'd somewhat recovered from my collapse.

Only once did she seek to question me. We were idly sunning ourselves on a bench in the garden at the time, and she asked, a trifle listlessly:

"Eric, what occurred? Did Thorulf——"

But I looked her squarely in the eyes and—lied!

"Oh, Thorulf crumbled into dust shortly after you fainted. Ask no more, Edwina."

I had the burial-mound blown up with high explosives. Specialists assure me that I may eventually recover wholly from—whatever it is that has made me as I am. But they are badly puzzled by my case, for I tell them nothing.

Edwina promised to ask no more questions. She has kept her word; yet, woman-like, she has very nearly violated it.

Yesterday she slipped her hand in mine as we walked, saying:

"Eric, though my body lay in a swoon—yet I somehow know and remember all that happened! I think—Eric—that the soul—never loses—consciousness."

Revelations of an Executioner

(*Continued from page 45*)

grin at me. "We'll see, Ed. You're a good man and I don't want to lose you."

"Get Jim Shane," I told him; "he'll make you a good executioner."

"No," the "Super" replied, "Shane wouldn't do. This job calls for a man with an unblemished reputation, and Shane's reputation is by no means good since he got out of the employ of the State. No, Shane wouldn't do."

I laughed at his remark about the necessity of an executioner having an "unblemished reputation."

"An executioner must have an unblemished reputation?" I mused. "God, but that's funny! A man who deals in heartlessness and death and whose hands are stained with the blood of his fellowmen, must have a good reputation? That's good!"

JIM SHANE, the bootlegger, couldn't measure up to the requirements of an executioner. I got no kick out of that, I assure you! In the eyes of the rank and file of mankind Jim Shane was a more desirable companion than I. He had friends. I was friendless. There were men and women who would shake his hand, and break bread with him, but there wasn't a man or woman in the world who would shake hands with me, or break bread with me! I killed to protect Society, and Society shunned me. I was considered a monstrous man, a man to be avoided.

Now I can go back to the tragedy to which I have already referred. I sent Mrs. Calhoun the check for $150, my fee for executing her poor son. Within a few days there came a letter from her, thanking me. I wish I had never read that letter. Among other things she wrote me:

> My Francis was not a bad boy at heart. He never talked back to me, or abused me. He was a good boy at heart. I guess it was God's will that he had to die, and I know that God will have mercy on his soul, for he was a good boy to me. I am ever so thankful to you for sending me all that money. Thank God there are some good hearted men in the world, and I will pray that God will reward you for helping me, Mr. Huberston. May God bless you.

"I killed her boy," I mused, "and yet she calls me a good hearted man and hopes that God will bless me. Poor woman! What would she say if she knew?"

The day after I received that letter, the tragedy arrived. My wife came home in a hysterical condition, screaming at the top of her voice. I heard her long before I saw her, and I sensed that something was terribly wrong. She came dashing into the house with a paper in her hand:

"Oh, Ed," she screamed, "read this."

She handed me the paper. My eyes caught a flaring headline in the paper. In big, black, heart-burning type I read:

> A conscience-stricken executioner gives his death house fee to mother of son he executed.

It was what a newspaper man would call "a bang-up story." It pointed out that I was the father of six children and it speculated on the motives which prompted me to send the grief-stricken mother my "death house fee." There were comments about other executions I had staged, and comments about how I was shunned by everybody and how my children were ostracized socially. I was "a lonely man who traveled a lone trail."

FOR a moment I was puzzled as to how the matter of my sending the check to Mrs. Calhoun had got out. Puzzled for a moment, and that was all. The scheme loomed up before me crystal clear. A moment's sober reflection gave me the answer. Jim Shane's daughter worked in the bank. The leak, obviously, came through her. She told her father. Her father saw another excellent opportunity to stab me again. He gave the story to the newspapers; that is, he had given it to his prospective son-in-law, a newspaper man, who was engaged to his daughter.

It was all, I repeat, clear as could be. Jim Shane and his daughter originated this exposé about my sending the check to Mrs. Calhoun. That was perfectly evident. No other explanation was possible because Mrs. Calhoun didn't know that I had executed her son. She had never known me, had never heard of me before she received the letter with my check enclosed. However, I was determined to investigate, and I was determined to make trouble for Jim Shane and his daughter. I went to the president of the bank and talked to him about giving newspapers confidential information relating to his clients. He was disposed to entertain the idea that the leak hadn't come from his organization. But when I showed him Mrs. Calhoun's letter to me, and gave him a word-picture of my relationship with Jim Shane, he immediately recognized the fact that Shane's daughter was at the bottom of the nasty piece of business—whereupon he called her into his office for an examination.

She admitted that she had told her father about the check and that her father had given the story to her fiancé. She knew, she said, from the newspapers, that Mrs. Calhoun was the mother of the boy I had executed. The president discharged her on the spot.

But I was not finished with Jim Shane, or his family. I was determined to make him and his family suffer, as he had made me and mine suffer. The dismissal of his daughter from the bank didn't appease my appetite for revenge—it merely intensified it.

"I'll never quit," I thought, "until I have broken him as he has broken me."

My boy, Frank, didn't sympathize with my plans. He thought it best to let the matter die a natural death.

"Forget about it, Pop," he said. "You've brought all this trouble on yourself, and on us. Let's forget it, and get away where nobody will ever know that you've been an executioner. What good will it do you to get even with Jim Shane? If you hurt him, you hurt innocent people—his wife and his children. Let's get away from this part of the

country and live as we should live."

I thought my boy was "yellow," and I told him so. I told him that if he was the right sort of son that he would go right out and thrash Jim Shane and his son, for what they did to me.

"I'm not yellow, as you put it," he replied slowly and meditatively. "I just can't see any sense in all this fighting and in this dirty game of recriminations. I'm sick of being advertised as the son of an executioner. Mother and the girls are sick of being pointed out as the wife and daughters of an executioner, and you should consider us and our feelings in the matter. Let's go away where nobody will know us and forget about Jim Shane."

GOD only knows how many times I have since wished that I had taken my boy's advice. I was too stubborn, too set on making Jim Shane sweat blood before I quit. It never occurred to me that I might sweat blood also.

The night of the day of this conversation with my boy, my wife and I were sitting in the kitchen discussing the matter. She had persuaded me to give up the idea of vengeance for the sake of her and the children. I saw her point of view and surrendered. We planned to get away from town as quickly as possible, and then came the tragedy. The phone rang. My wife answered it. She screamed and fainted. I took the receiver:

"Captain Durant at Police Headquarters, speaking." I felt myself growing weak. "Is this Mr——?" He spoke my right name, which I am not at liberty to give here.

"Yes," I said. "What's happened?"

"Jim Shane's son, Willie, just killed your boy, Frank."

It was a cold-blooded murder, as witnesses to the affair subsequently testified. Willie Shane met my boy coming out of a moving picture theatre. He laughed at Frank and taunted him about the story in the papers, concerning my check to Mrs. Calhoun. Frank, one of the witnesses said, moved away, but young Shane followed him, passing remarks about his "convict-killing father with the bloody hands," whereupon Frank told him that his own father had tried to get the job as executioner by underbidding me. Accusations flew back and forth and in the midst of the argument young Shane drew a gun and killed my boy.

My misery had no voice. I was crushed, absolutely! I had lost my boy. Nothing that could happen now would hurt me. I was dumb—as hopeless and dumb as some of the men I had killed in the chair. I had embraced the creed of hate and—this was my reward. In trying to crush my enemy I had been crushed!

DAYS passed, months passed, before the old idea of blood for blood came back to me. Not until after my boy's burial, and Willie Shane's conviction for first degree murder, did I think of revenge. When young Shane was condemned to die in the electric chair I felt like a new man.

"Jim Shane's son in the chair." That thought sent the blood tingling through my veins.

The idea of executing the son of the man I hated with all my heart and soul, thrilled me to the core. That was my idea of a subtle revenge—bloody, but subtle.

"Here is one execution that will give me a kick," I said to myself. "I have triumphed at last!"

I advised the Superintendent of Prisons that I had reconsidered my determination to resign.

"I have filled the job for nine years," I wrote him, "and I reckon I am good for nine years more."

So I stuck by the switchboard to blast a few more lives out of the bodies of murderers. I killed them, but always I was living in the future, looking ahead to that night when the son of Jim Shane would come through that little green door to the chair. That would be the night of nights with me when the chair's fiery fangs snapped into the marrow of the bones of my enemy's son!

The criticisms of Society meant nothing to me now—no more than the blistering blasphemies of the chair victims whom I sent over the border to eternity. Nothing mattered to me now. The pleas of my wife and children to "give up the dirty business" meant nothing. I had killed for nine years and I was determined to kill until I had sent Jim Shane's son where I had sent more than a hundred others.

"I may quit—after I have squared accounts with Jim Shane," I told my wife.

As the days rolled along I never wavered, though many people thought I would. Many people thought I would not kill Shane's son. The impression had gone abroad that I would probably pass the job over to somebody else.

"They don't know me," I mused. 'I'll show 'em!"

Finally the Supreme Court heard his appeal for a new trial.

The Supreme Court ruled against him and set the date of his execution. I was happy. Then came an appeal to the Governor. The Governor refused to intervene.

"The law must take its course," he said. "I can find no reason, no good cause for executive clemency in this case."

Like Shylock, I thought him "a wise and noble judge." He wouldn't deprive me of my chance to exact my bloody tribute. No, nobody would interfere and so I was looking forward to that night when Willie Shane would walk over and sit in the prayer chair where so many dozens of others like him had taken their last flash at the panorama of life. They were happy days, I thought. And every day that came was happier than the one that had gone by, for it meant one more day nearer to a realization of my insane ambition—to execute the son of the man who had injured me.

When the day of the execution came, a fiendish idea took hold of me. Up until that day I was satisfied with the idea of merely executing young Shane, but now, on the day of the night of the execution, I thought of a plan to torture Willie Shane before he died. And, I thought, this plan will make "a bang-up story" for the newspaper men. It would be something new and horrible for the "pencil pushers" to rave about. Above all, I was thinking of Jim Shane and his family. I knew they would read the story, and I was sure it would tear the heart out of them. That's what I wanted to do—tear the heart out of them.

WHAT was my fiendish plan? Very simple. Instead of turning on the current full force when the doctor gave me the signal to throw in the switch, I would only ease it in slowly, giving the victim half of nineteen hundred volts and nine amperes, and thus prolong death—and at the same time prolong torture. Further still, it would scorch the flesh, and possibly burn it slowly, so that the effects would be plainly visible to the witnesses and newspaper men. This was to be my last execution and I was in the grip of a maniacal desire to make it a spectacular one for the benefit of Jim Shane and his family, and all the rest of the white-livered members of Society who scorned and shunned me.

The day of the execution! How well I remember it, though it is now five years back. It was a long day to me, this day of days. I thought night would never come. I had gone to the prison unusually early to make ready for Willie Shane. The chair was put in fine shape for that night's work. I had never spent so much time on it before an execution.

Ordinarily I seldom ate before an execution, but on this night of nights I ate ravenously. I was happy and carefree and about to consummate a great ambition, I thought. An hour before the hour set for the execution I was in the chair room going over the wires again. Then I sat down. The little door through which Willie Shane would come to me presently was directly in front of me. I moved over to the door and put my ear up against it. I could hear the minister praying and I could hear a sob now and then. I was happy.

"You'll join my boy, Frank, pretty soon. Pretty soon you'll be sent across, the same as he was, with all your sins on your head. And your pap will suffer when I burn you up, boy! Come on, come on—cut out the praying!" I muttered under my breath.

And then he came in. I will never forget the look on that kid's face. He was as white as a sheet. But they're all that way and I was used to that. I guess he had just left his mother a few minutes before. Anyhow, there was a pleading look in his eyes, for someone to stop it, that wasn't altogether fear. He was a brave kid all right and the thoughts of his mother's moans and her last, pitiful kiss, were hurting him more than his dread of the chair they were beginning to strap him in.

But this didn't get a rise out of me. There wasn't any pity for human suffering left in my heart. As I watched the guards adjust the strap on his leg, I was saying to myself: "Your dad, Jim Shane, is eating out his heart right now for you, boy. And when I start to give you the juice, the way I'm going to give it in less than one minute now—there'll be another story to that!"

I stepped nearer the switch, to be ready.

The kid was staring ahead of him, trying to keep his nerve. His lips were moving. I could almost see his eyes bulge out. Terror was upon him, now that only a few seconds more were left to him before the biting flame would begin to zig-zag through him from the electrode on his bared right leg.

I set my jaw and reached my hand near the switch handle. The guards stepped back quickly. The kid slumped forward a little and gave a scared look at the witnesses, just as I took hold of the switch handle.

I had caught the signal but my hand didn't move. Something compelled me to look around. I was more scared than the kid ever thought of being and for the instant I forgot where I was, for there, moving toward me, with hand upraised, was the ghost of my son, Frank. His face was set. His eyes were upon me, and I was too paralyzed to move.

It all happened in a few seconds of time. He was near me now, and, his eyes blazing at me like coals of fire, he said:

"Dad, don't do that! As God is your witness, don't do that! You killed me, just as much as Willie Shane did. You're responsible. You have blood on your hands! Dad, don't do it! . . . Don't do it! . . . Don't! . . . Don't! . . ."

I started, dumbstruck. The words rang in my ears as if someone had shouted them. There was Frank, slowly moving past me—advancing as in a mist toward the electric chair where Willie Shane sat, in the last stages of death fright. Just as he got to the chair, what semed like an arm of the mist-like form, appeared to wave me away from the switch. I dropped my hand, without pulling the lever, and leaned against the wall.

Frank had disappeared. Willie was still alive, and there was a murmur of voices outside. One of the guards rushed in: "For God's sake, pull the switch—quick!" he said. "Pull it, man—pull it!"

Instead, I walked out—past the guard—out the door. I never looked back, nor uttered a word of explanation. I left someone else to do that blood job. I did not know who they could get to do it, and I did not care who they got, or whether or not they could get anyone at all. I was through with it! My boy Frank had shown me the way. I stumbled out of the yard, past the outer guards and never looked up nor said a word. They looked at me wonderingly, for they knew an execution was taking place, and knew who I was, but they did not stop me.

WHEN I got home my wife couldn't believe her eyes. "But John——" she began.

"It's all over," I said. "We move out of this town tomorrow and we're going to forget the past."

That was the beginning of happiness for my wife and my daughter. They weren't ashamed to look people in the face after that day.

Probably readers will remember this same affair I have told about. The inside story, however, never got to the newspapers—how I left the execution chamber with Willie Shane in the chair awaiting the death charge, and walked out on them with no one to do the job of killing the boy. But the part about the Governor telephoning to the prison, commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment at the last minute—that part did get to the papers. It was thought the message would be in time to stop the execution—and it was. But it wouldn't have been in time had there been no delay.

TODAY I am supremely happy that I didn't execute that boy. I wish I had never seen the electric chair. It has given me nothing but misery and heart aches and nights of horror when I think of all the men, young and old, whom I have killed.

Capital punishment is a colossal blunder, unscientific and inhumane. It does not stop men from killing. It has never been a deterrent of crime, and never will be, and if the law made every judge and jury witness and participate in the execution of every unfortunate man that they condemned to death, capital punishment wouldn't last very long.

I have suffered more than any of the unfortunate victims of the chair. My family has suffered. But now we're away from it all. Nobody knows me where we live now. I have friends at last. People shake hands with me and break bread with me. I'm no longer an outcast on a lone trail, no longer the "rat-eyed man of death." I stand in the sun and inhale God's fresh air, and I am glad to be alive. I no longer take what I cannot give!

You might be asking in your mind now, whether I believe in ghosts, whether I believe that the spirits of the dead return to earth, and communicate with the living. In reply to that I will say that I do believe it. And when I say it, I'm not smiling.

The Mystery of the Vanished Bride

(*Continued from page* 23)

of abstraction about him. He was, I noticed, muttering something to himself as though he had entirely lost consciousness of my presence. I caught a word now and then.

"Gone . . . all gone . . . the glory . . . the splendor . . . vanished . . . a thing of dust . . . while I . . . every hope of happiness frustrated." Then he laughed queerly. Looking up, he caught sight of my startled face and changed his tone.

"MARGERY, this is the hall of my ancestors. Many ladies and gentlemen whose blood I carry in my veins have walked through these rooms and died within these walls. I've heard some rare old stories about them; of love affairs, scandals, murders. They were a hot-headed, egotistical race; they denied themselves nothing that could be gained by fair means or foul. If their plans were frustrated, then someone always suffered. This reminds me of a story my father told me. It happened about seventy years ago. While we are waiting for the rain to pass I will tell it to you.

"My great-uncle—by the way, his name was the same as my own, Michael Le Moine—was in love with his young orphaned cousin, Eunice, who had been reared by his mother. She was very beautiful and always went about the place singing. The girl seemed to return his love until a handsome stranger came upon the scene. Then she forgot the smiles and kisses she had given my great-uncle Michael, and transferred her affections to the young stranger. She heeded not Michael's pleadings. She was determined to marry the stranger, and, as the family did not object, preparations were made for the marriage. Michael declared to her she should never marry her lover. She laughed at him.

"Well," on her wedding eve, while she sat in her room which is directly above us, gowned in her bridal clothes which she had been trying on, Eunice disappeared. She was never seen again, and no trace was ever found of her. Today her fate remains a mystery. But they say her spirit still lingers here; that during certain hours of the night those who listen can hear her singing . . . singing. . . ."

A loud crash of thunder shook the timbers of the old mansion from wall to wall. The windows rattled loudly and the wind, moaning, swept around the corners of the place. Shivers ran up and down my spine. The weirdness of the situation began to affect my steady nerves. I looked at the man beside me. Lightning flashes played grotesquely across his features. He seemed a total stranger to me. There was something queer and strange here, and I wished myself at home.

"Come," Michael said suddenly, when he had finished his story, clasping my arm tightly in a grip that hurt. "It will soon be dark; we must hurry. Let's have a look at the panel—the panel which is to be your bridal present," and he broke into a strained laugh.

Full of apprehension, I followed him to the right of the staircase where the carved panel stood. It was about the size of a door, and though covered with mould and dust, it was a beautiful piece of work; a field of tulips, carved with exquisite skill by the hand of an artist. Forgetting my gloomy feelings, I was all admiration. I leaned forward to get a closer view of it.

"Oh, Margery, Margery!" It was Michael Le Moine's impassioned tones that brought me erect. He was kneeling at my feet—— "I cannot give you up to another. You are mine—mine! I cannot live without you. Promise me you will break with Lang and marry me."

I was never more indignant in all my life and I felt not a shred of pity for this man. He had brought me to this old out-of-the-way place for this—this! It was cowardly and I told him so. He must understand once and for all David Lang was the man I loved, and nothing could prevent our marriage—nothing!

"And this is your final decision?" Michael was on his feet now, and his tones were like ice.

"It is," I answered with emphasis. "Much as I would like to retain your friendship for old times' sake, Michael Le Moine, if you ever mention this again, I shall cease to speak to you."

"I shall not mention it again," he answered and there was a peculiar glitter in his eyes. "Come, Margery, let us examine the panel closer. It will make such a fitting bridal gift, don't you think? See here, Margery——" I noticed his long, slim fingers as they touched the carved petals of the tulips one by one—"how wonderful and perfect is the carving of the flowers—even to the minutest detail. It is perfect—perfect—see—see—look closer. It is so splendidly done, and all for you—your bridal gift. It reminds one of lofty cathedrals, grand, swelling music, of all awe-inspiring things such as—death!"

The last word broke from Michael Le Moine's lips with a hiss. At that moment the panel moved upward revealing a cavern-like opening. Startled beyond words, I stepped back, but the man's hands closed on my shoulders. I tried to throw them off, but he seemed endowed with superhuman strength. "Since you won't marry me, your bridegroom shall be death!" exclaimed Michael, as he gave a ringing, maniacal laugh, and thrust me, resisting, into the yawning opening. I shrieked wildly as the panel closed behind me.

I HAD never been very emotional, nor did I lose my wits easily; but as the door of that secret chamber closed upon me leaving me alone there in the darkness, with the cobwebs and the choking dust of years, I was wild with fear; terror shook me as the wind shakes an aspen. I pounded the thick, solid door with my hands until they were sore, calling in piteous tones to the man outside for mercy.

Oh! it couldn't be possible! This was the twentieth century. Happenings such as this belonged to the middle ages. Michael had been my playfellow, my lover; he could not be such a fiend unless—— Then I recalled what I had once heard about the Le Moines—a streak of insanity in the family, which at the time I had dismissed as idle gossip. Now, the horrible conviction thrust itself upon me. *Michael was insane.* He was heavily in debt; this, together with my rejection, was sufficient to unbalance him.

And I was doomed to die here in the dark, to perish inch by inch, while the skies were blue outside and the birds sang sweetly in the tree-tops—and my wedding day only a week off. Great, shuddering sobs shook my frame, and left me, after what seemed an age, exhausted, unable to shed another tear.

They would search for me—David, my mother, and others—but they would never find me. I was buried alive. No one

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8 DAYS - ONE WINDING

would ever suspect that I was a prisoner in the old Le Moine mansion; there was no possibility of anyone beside Michael Le Moine, himself, knowing the secret of the hidden spring in the carved tulip.

I moved away from the door, and stooping, felt along the floor with my hands. My fingers encountered the top rung of a stairway. I placed my right foot on it, felt forward again, then made my way downward step by step. The cobwebs, brushing my face, made me cough, and my eyes ache. There was a scurrying noise as I advanced. Rats! Well, I was not afraid of rats.

Soon I sensed that I had emerged into a chamber of some sort. Groping forward, my hands encountered bleak walls with no outlet. There was a certain comfort in the place. I could breathe better and I felt less chilled. I sank down on the floor presently and lay huddled in a little heap, moans breaking from my lips.

Oh! why had I trusted Michael Le Moine? But who would have suspected?

THEN hope came. It was night now; maybe when day broke again I would be able to find some way out, some egress from my prison. But would the breaking of day bring light to this place? Despair assailed me. Finally, worn out, after long hours, I dozed. When I opened my eyes again a dim light was streaming into my prison from somewhere above.

I started up, bewildered for the moment, cold and sore. The half-light revealed a small, square room. What was that thing huddled in the corner? I must see.

Arising, I dragged myself across the floor. Moulded garments, yellowed lacy things, seemed to be draped about something . . . what? It looked like a kneeling figure. I bent over and lifted a fold of the crumbling lace. I could not keep back the shriek that broke from my lips. The garments covered a human skeleton and a ghastly skull with staring, empty eye-sockets lay exposed before my eyes. Composing myself, I looked closer. Then —I knew!

Michael Le Moine's story of the girl, Eunice, who had scorned his great-uncle's love had been a true one, for these crumbling yellowed garments—wedding garments—clung to the bones of what had once been a young girl—a girl like myself. Eunice was kidnapped in her bridal gown, and thrust into that death chamber by the uncle—even as his nephew and namesake had thrust me. And, like this hapless girl, I was doomed. Years later, perhaps, when the old building was razed, they would find two skeletons instead of one—and one would be my own!

A day of torture followed. Search as I might, no way of escape revealed itself. Hunger had assailed me and I was very thirsty.

When the dim light of day faded again into darkness I felt that I must go mad. Then came a blessed reaction. I slipped to the floor, only half-conscious.

For a time I slept, a sleep broken by horrid dreams of huge monsters that clutched at my throat and choked me. Suddenly I was awake again.

A strange unearthly light filled the secret chamber. From out the gloomy corners before my amazed eyes there trooped a phantom horde—strange, startling figures of men and women, frightful in their ghastliness. The smell of damp graves upon them, ghosts of long dead Le Moines, and Michael was among them; Michael, who sneered and jibed at me as the terrible procession filed by. The room rang with his maniacal laughter, while I clutched at my throat in terror.

Slowly the weird light faded out; the ghosts flitted on, and darkness again filled the room.

Presently I became aware of a soft, warm glow filling the chamber. Far away, echoing from the empty rooms above me, I heard the sound of singing—joyous singing—as if issuing from the throat of one young and happy. My terror vanished. Then suddenly, moving toward me, the center of a dazzling, luminous circle, I saw the slight figure of a girl clad in trailing bridal raiment. Smiling sweetly, she paused by my side, and bent over me as I lay on the floor. I felt the touch of soft, light fingers on my brow. I was not lonely now, nor fearful.

"BE not unhappy, dear," the ghost-bride murmured. "It will all come right. As is your fate, so was mine. But I am happy now beyond words. We are together, my beloved and I, in a brighter sphere. Hate never triumphs over Love, nor Evil over Good, though often to limited mortal vision it seems thus to do. There is always hope. Mortals have gained more knowledge since I was one of you; you are wiser than I was; use your knowledge, and yet on earth you may triumph!"

The vision slowly faded. But I was strangely comforted.

Another day glimmered into my prison. The gnawing pangs of hunger were less violent now. But my tongue and throat were swollen.

I knelt beside the girl's skeleton in the corner, touching gently the fleshless hand with my warm palm.

"Thank you, little bride," I said, "for your visit. You have helped me." Then I prayed.

After I had prayed, I felt better. But when my one ray of light departed and left me again in darkness, terror assailed me once more. Oh, that I could die now without further torture! I wept aloud in my anguish and misery. Then, exhausted, I dozed again. I awoke suddenly. Again I heard singing, faint and far off, then nearer, until it filled my chamber with its ringing melody.

Once more the ghost-bride stood beside me. A gentle hand, light as down, was laid on my arm, and a gentle voice whose low sweet cadences were like music, addressed me:

"I, in that forgotten time—seventy years as you count time—suffered even as you are suffering. But I am happier now for it. This is the great plan. All who suffer innocently are given a greater portion of joy—justice demands it. But you are wiser than I was then—you have pursued knowledge, earthly happiness can yet be yours. Do not despair. Use your knowledge."

And the vision faded once again.

My mind was wonderfully clear now; gone were the horrid visions of darkness and death. I thought of my home, of the plans for my wedding, of my fiance.

"Oh, David, dear David, how you must be suffering. If I could only send you a message!

Send David a message!

Like a clap of thunder came the words "mental telepathy."

I was sitting by our little gas log. I had been discussing the possibility of mental telepathy with David. I had declared: "I believe it possible, that it has been done, and is being done. But oh, how I would like to demonstrate it!" And he had answered, "Why not try to send me a mental message sometime? I will try to tune in."

And now!

But could I? I arose from the hard floor where I had been lying. Strength, will, and hope, were returning to me. Great reserves of mental strength seemed to surge into my mind. I felt buoyant, uplifted, confident. My breath came deeply. Closing my eyes I focussed my mental strength and——

I HEARD what followed from David's lips.

After two days of ceaseless searching, going without food or sleep, he stumbled into his sleeping quarters in the East Dormitory. He was near the point of exhaustion, he said.

The whole town had been aroused when my disappearance had become known. Little could be gained from my mother. "I just slipped in to take a nap—I left Margery sewing in her room—that was the last I saw of her," she wailed hysterically. How they had searched—the men, women, and children. But not a trace of me could they find.

What a mystery! And in the very midst of all the excitement Michael Le Moine had shot himself to death. Debts, it was said—and too much drinking.

Heart-broken, David said he felt that he could never sleep again. Margery gone —vanished—within a week of the wedding day. But why, he asked himself? Surely she had been happy in their love. Oh, the horrible mystery of it all!

THEN, he said, he sat down heavily in his big study chair and looked at his watch—12:30 A. M.—one half hour past midnight. Soon it would be three nights of worry and anguish. It seemed years since he had seen me last. Oh, that he could know that I was not suffering, trapped somewhere.

He leaned his head against the back of his chair. My face smiling, as he had seen it last, rose clearly before him. Then he thought, Oh, Margery, Margery! What a dear she is! How she loved me, and we had been so happy, so congenial, so perfectly in tune . . . in tune . . . yes. . .

He sat suddenly upright in his chair. What was happening? He felt wide-awake, alert. There was a strange crackling in his ears, a buzzing. Then he seemed to hear a voice, but there was no sound in the room—my voice—far off. Slowly, clearly, through the ether, spanning space, the radiations came—ever clearer—clearer. Thoughts out of the void took form and order in his brain. It was but a receiving instrument—his brain. What was this?

"David! David! . . . Listen! . . . I am a prisoner in . . . a secret chamber . . . the old Le Moine mansion . . . door under

the stairway . . . press spring in the fifth tulip on the right . . . hasten! . . . I perish."

David staggered to his feet. His thoughts were:

"A mental message from Margery! At last for us mental telepathy has been proven possible! The reign of Mind on earth had begun! Another testimony could be given to the world of science!"

Then again, he said, came the message strong and clear, connected now.

"The old Le Moine mansion; the door under the stairway; press spring in fifth tulip on the right."

He was out of the dormitory and across the campus in three minutes. As he rushed into the street, four automobiles filled with men drove up. They were returning from another fruitless search.

"Men, men," he exclaimed, "I can find her; I know where she is!" He leaped into one of the cars. "Drive at once to the old Le Moine mansion—we will find her there."

Without question, David said, the men obeyed. In ten minutes they were at the old ruin. In three minutes more, flashlights in hand, they were entering the doorway. In three seconds pressure from David's strong thumb had swung open the secret panel, and I was in his arms, sobbing wildly. A few words told the story.

It was about three weeks later when I remarked to my husband: "At any rate, our study of psychics last winter certainly brought us good results. But I never would have thought to communicate with you if the little ghost-bride had not urged me to "use my knowledge."

"It was an awful experience, but from a psychical standpoint, a helpful one. I witnessed with my own eyes spiritualistic phenomena—oh, I know they tell me it 'thought waves produce waves in the was but dreams, but I know better—and I 'thought waves produce waves in the surrounding ether, reaching the mind in tune with the sending mind.'"

"And at the same time—it solved the mystery of the vanished bride," commented David with a smile.

He Told Me He Married a Ghost!

(*Continued from page* 39)

intensity from time to time. What could this be!

"I hope your eyes will soon be all right, Miss Graham," I said, more for the purpose of making conversation than for any other reason. It occurred to me that she had not as yet spoken a single word.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Kains," she replied, in a low, queer little voice. It was a whisper, a well modulated whisper, but just such a whisper as one would expect from a person whose vocal cords had almost ceased to function.

"Miss Graham has been having some trouble with her voice," Bob interposed. "The same trouble, you know—a sort of general infection."

"Oh, yes," I answered. "I hope she's not running any risk coming out here tonight."

"I don't think so," whispered the girl, with a little soundless laugh.

"Oh, dear, no," said Bob. "She's acting under the doctor's orders, you know."

THE Jap, moving deftly about the table in the obscurity, impressed me as possessing the key to the mystery. Was the girl living in Bob's house, and had he elaborated all his mechanism for the purpose of hiding that fact from me? But why the pretense of eye and throat trouble? I was convinced that Millicent Graham could have talked if she had wanted to.

The meal ended. The girl had not tasted a single mouthful, for I had been watching her. We rose—and suddenly I had a shock that paralyzed me with horror.

As she leaned forward, the rays of the red light fell directly upon her head—or, where her head should have been—for, to my horror I saw that she had no head! The instant that light touched it directly, it dissolved! Probably her entire body was of the same ethereal substance, I told myself, with a shudder.

Sick with horror, I followed the two back into the living room. Bob, who had been whispering to the girl, now turned to me. "Miss Graham thinks she ought to go home," he said. "She was so anxious to meet you, she overestimated her strength. I'm sorry, old man, but do you mind waiting while I run her back? She doesn't live far away."

I assented, and Miss Graham, with a bow and a smile to me, passed out of the room on Bob's arm. I sat there, palsied with horror at what I had seen. How was it possible for a woman to live and yet be capable of being dissolved by rays of light?"

I wanted to run away, as a child runs from some unseen terror. But I only waited, hearing Bob start up his car in the garage. Then, as the machine began slowly backing into the drive, I went to the window and looked out. The moon was shining, and I saw what I had known I should see—Bob sitting alone in the machine, with no trace of Miss Graham anywhere!

TEN minutes later he was back. "Well, old man," he said heartily, "it certainly was a bit of a fiasco, our little party tonight, but Millicent will soon be stronger, and then I'm sure you'll become good friends. What did you think of her?"

"A very charming girl," I answered. "Quite an unusual girl." I was deliberately provoking him, for I was indignant at the way he had fooled me. I had no doubt that Millicent Graham had retired to her quarters upstairs by the back entrance to the house, while Bob had gone through all that ritual of driving the car in order to deceive me.

"Unusual? In what way?" he challenged me.

"Well, that's a little difficult to say, Bob," I returned.

"There's nothing in the least extraordinary about her," he returned huffily. "Millicent has had a great deal of sickness of late, a general infection of the eyes and throat, and she wasn't up to par tonight, that's all."

"Please forgive me if I seemed critical, my dear fellow," I answered. "As I said, I think your fiancée is a most charming lady, and I hope to be privileged to see more of you both."

He was still disturbed when I bade him good-night and made my way back to New York. I was glad to be out of that house of mystery.

I said that I had had a certain experience which had changed my point of view in matters of psychic interest. I was convinced that Bob was playing with things into which men on this side of the grave are not meant to pry. In other words, I believed that Millicent Graham was not Marjory's twin sister at all, but a wraith through whom Bob came into communication with the spirit of his dead wife.

She had seemed to me like a woman in a trance all that evening. I believed she had been entranced, that Bob had meant to let me into his secret, and at the last moment had been afraid.

In the case I have referred to—into which I have no intention of entering now—I had had the services of a certain Doctor Martinus, a Pole or Czecho-Slovak physician, who had a reputation among the intelligent for solving psychic phenomena. He had an assistant, one Arthur Branscombe, a blustering sort of fellow who was engaged in writing the Doctor's biography, or something like that. I did not like the man Branscombe, but I did think it worth while consulting the little Doctor.

True, it was not my business, but I had an uneasy feeling that Bob Willis was playing with fire that was likely to scorch his fingers. The upshot of my deliberations was that I paid a visit to Martinus' home a day or two later, and laid the facts before him.

The Doctor listened to my story impassively, barking out an occasional question, until I mentioned the strange circumstance of the girl's head dissolving under light—or at least, appearing to dissolve. Then he seemed to grow alert.

"You are sure you never heard of this Millicent Graham while her sister was alive?" he asked.

"Absolutely, and I don't for one moment suppose that there was a twin."

"Was there anything of a resemblance between the living woman and the dead one?"

I had occupied myself with trying to ascertain, but in the dimness of the room, imagination had played too strong a role for me to arrive at any conclusions. I told Martinus so.

He drummed his fingers on his desk. "I should like to see this Millicent Graham," he said slowly. "Can it be arranged?"

This was a difficult question. I did not see any immediate way to introduce Doctor Martinus into Bob Willis' house.

"I'll try to arrange it, if the opportunity offers," I answered. "What do you think it is—the dead woman appearing through the body of the fake sister?"

"Worse than that," replied the Doctor.

I gasped at the thought that came to me. "You don't mean—Millicent Graham is the dead woman herself, materialized?" I stammered.

"Worse still," said Martinus. "Try to make those arrangements and call me up as soon as you can. I fancy Mr. Robert Willis needs my services more than he knows."

I DID not see any way in which I could introduce Martinus into Bob Willis' house. My curiosity had by now given place to deep anxiety on Bob's behalf. What had Martinus meant by his ominous remarks concerning Bob's need of him? However, since there was apparently nothing that could be done, I tried to put Bob out of my mind. I was by no means sure that I was likely to see him again.

Then, about three weeks later, Bob appeared at my apartment one evening. I was astounded at the change in his appearance. He looked stronger, stouter, coarser. He greeted me with a boisterous laugh. I smelled liquor upon his breath. And, to my disgust, I discovered that he was considerably under its influence.

"Well, Jim," he cried, "things have progressed since that night you had dinner with us. Millicent has practically got back the use of her eyes and voice. We were married this afternoon—now, what d'you think of that?" Bob muttered. thickly.

Married? The man was mad! This couldn't be the Bob Willis I had known in the past, always a gentleman, this drunken, loud-voiced fellow, sitting in my apartment and telling me that he had got married that day to a ghost!

"Then—really, my dear fellow——" I began.

He laughed again. "I know what you're thinking, Jim, old buck!" he cried. "Where's friend wife, hey? Well, it's like this: I got word by telephone that certain parties were preparing to close a business deal for several thousand dollars, if I'd come down right away. So there was nothing to do but leave the blushing bride and go to see them. I've closed the deal, Jim, and now I want you and two or three other jolly fellows to come up to the house about nine o'clock, and we'll have a little impromptu reception. You go pick them up, and we'll be waiting for you. We'll dance—the wife's great on dancing. And I've got some choice prewar stock up there. How about it? Can you lay hold of two or three fellows of the right sort?"

Here was the opportunity I had been hoping for! "Why, I think I could get two friends of mine to come," I said, remembering that the man Branscombe invariably accompanied the Doctor on his expeditions.

"That will be first-rate, Jim," boomed Bob. "You see, I—I've sort of got out of touch with people. I don't really know anybody who'd come on the spur of the moment, and the wife wants a jolly party."

IF I had suspected that something was wrong, I was sure of it now. As soon as Bob had left, I called up Doctor Martinus. I caught him just as he was starting out for a medical convention; instantly he agreed to throw up his engagement and accompany me. I was to be at his house at 8:30, and he and Branscombe would accompany me in the Doctor's car.

Martinus and Branscombe were waiting for me when I arrived. I had not told the Doctor much over the telephone; as soon as we were in the car, which Branscombe drove, I gave him the particulars of the interview with Bob. I spoke of his changed appearance; but when I told him that Bob had been married that afternoon, Martinus uttered a sharp exclamation.

"What do you suppose is at the bottom of this crazy behavior of his?" I asked.

"I think," replied Martinus, "that his good angel is working for him against the Powers of Darkness."

"You mean the dead woman?"

I saw that he did mean that, though he would not commit himself.

"You mean—but I'm all at sea, Doctor," I said. "Who, in God's name, is this Millicent Graham?"

"That we shall see," was all the answer I could get out of him. But I could see that he was feverishly impatient to reach the end of the journey, more so than the circumstances seemed to warrant.

"Let her out, Branscombe," he said more than once, as we sped northward.

We made a fifty-mile gait along the shore of the Hudson, until at length we drew up outside Bob's house. The illumination was still faint, as if a single low-power bulb was burning, but from the living room came the sound of Bob's noisy laughter, and the strains of dance music on a radio.

The Jap opened the door to us almost as soon as we reached the outside. With a sharply indrawn breath he ushered us in. I saw Martinus give him a swift, piercing glance of scrutiny.

BOB came forward out of the living room to meet us. If he had been under the influence of alcohol before, he was plainly drunk now. He staggered toward us. There was some sort of an introduction, but I purposely slurred the names, in case he might have heard of the Doctor. Anyway, Bob was in no condition to catch them. He made a show of helping us off with our coats, and we went into the living room, where the radio was thumping out raucous jazz.

She was there—his wife—seated on a lounge, and she rose with a charming smile of welcome as we entered. I could see now that she was very like Marjory. The resemblance was an uncanny one. And, as she came forward, I dismissed as crazy my ideas that she might be the spirit of the dead woman materialized. Why, if ever there was a living woman, Millicent was one.

It was with difficulty that I could retain my presence of mind sufficiently to take the hand she offered me. That hand might have been a lump of ice. There was not only none of the ordinary animal heat in it, there was a curious absence of something—of pulsation, of vitality. It might have been a clay hand that I had taken hold of.

"Well, folks, you know each other now," Bob shouted. "Let's have a dance. Come, no formalities. You, Jim, take Marjory first. Post of honor as an old friend—ha, ha!"

I noticed that he called her "Marjory." Was this a slip of the tongue, or——

She turned toward me with a smile and a bow, and I placed my arm about her. And to the tune of a rollicking jazzy tune we moved out into the room in the first steps of the fox-trot.

I HAD not gone a dozen steps with her before I realized that there was not a particle of animal heat in her body. She was cold—cold as the hand that she had given me. And again, though her form was solid enough, there was the same lack of something. Not of buoyancy, for she seemed to float in my arms. It was the same feeling that there was no vitality there, that I was holding a model of sculptor's clay, but curiously etherealized.

And there was more than that. For as I danced with her I was conscious of a strange ebbing of my own vitality. I felt as if a part of my being was being drawn away. The room began to swim around me, and I felt that I was losing consciousness.

Losing consciousness of my immediate surroundings, but another, deeper, diabolical consciousness seemed to be awakening within me. It was as if some chained beast in the depths of my nature was stirring, striving to throw off the yoke of my personality, and come into its own.

Faster, faster we swung in that diabolical dance, and now I was aware of nothing except the girl I held in my embrace, while the hideous tune went on and on. How long had we been dancing together? Aeons, perhaps! I struggled, and I felt all the influence of Millicent Willis put forth to hold me, not only by a physical, but by some immaterial bond. I could not tear myself away.

On and on we spun. I was at the last gasp of consciousness, when of a sudden the radio stopped. I came back to myself, to see Millicent looking at me with an inscrutable expression on her face.

"You dance splendidly, Mr. Kains," she said in a queer voice that was little more than the whisper I had heard on the occasion of my former visit. "What a pity that we can't dance our lives together."

An extraordinary speech, but it did not seem so to me then. I only knew that I would have given my life for this woman, whom I both loved and hated with all the capacity of my being.

And suddenly Martinus stepped forward between us. He raised my arm and took it from Millicent's waist. I remember it felt as if some magnetic force was holding it there.

"My dance, Mrs. Willis," said the Doctor.

The radio had begun again. Faint, dizzy, and still not master of myself, I stepped back to Branscombe's side. The big assistant to the Doctor was watching

me curiously. Bob had sunk into a chair, befuddled with the liquor that he had taken. I looked at the Doctor. He and Millicent were beginning the steps of a waltz. I had not guessed that Martinus could dance, but they waltzed divinely, the girl overtopping the Doctor by half a head.

But in a moment or two I perceived that some sort of struggle was proceeding between them, a struggle of wills. I saw Millicent turn her face away, then turn it back, reluctantly, as if compelled by the Doctor's gaze. And suddenly she stopped in the middle of the floor, and a piercing scream broke from her lips.

A wild, unearthly scream, like nothing human—like the sound of a seagull's cry, and yet so full of terror that it made my flesh quiver.

At the sound of it Bob Willis was upon his feet, and rushing forward toward the two. Big Arthur Branscombe stood in his way. Bob rushed at him, and Branscombe struck him with his fist upon the forehead and sent him reeling back.

Suddenly the radio "faded," and grew silent, as if it had blown out, or as if an S.O.S. call had been given. The light went out. The room was in utter darkness. An icy wind swept it, rustling the hangings and moving the curtains at the windows. And I heard the sound as of a whispering mob that filled the room.

A whispering mob of spirits! Why, the room was filled with soft, pliable bodies pressing against my own, horrible yielding things on which my fists made no impression.

I was using them blindly, and in a frenzy of fear. My right fist caught something much more substantial upon the point of the chin, and sent it flying across the floor. I leaped at it. In the faint light I saw the old Japanese, his face convulsed with fury, a long knife in his hand. He lunged straight for my throat, caught my cheek, and slit it from chin to mouth. Then I had torn the knife from his hand and sent him down with another blow.

I turned. The room was filled with devils, whispering, leering devils, invisible things that seemed to occupy every foot of space. Somewhere I heard Martinus panting, as if in a death-struggle. I saw the big form of Arthur Branscombe near me. Branscombe had Bob by the throat, and was forcing him backward. And I was fighting with invisible forces that caught at me, and tripped me, and sent me reeling this way and that.

Suddenly I saw Millicent's face. The girl was standing almost exactly where she had been when she stopped dancing. A light that did not come from outside played about her face, and it was the face of a smiling devil.

THAT light went out, but I heard the devilish whispers grow louder. And suddenly a chant broke from Martinus' an old chant of exorcism, delivered in the old Slavonic tongue. But to my horror other voices took it up and answered him. And others still, as if contending, and trying to drown the words.

You know the music in *Faust*, when the devil contends for the soul of Margaret in the church? It was even like that, for that chant of heavenly and devilish voices was hideously blended, but only as an echo to the words that Martinus shouted as he swayed to and fro inside the room. And all the while I was fighting, and Branscombe was engaged in a renewed struggle with Bob Willis.

And then, of a sudden, it was all ended. The first thing, curiously incongruous, was the sound of the radio, playing one of the latest dances. Then the light went on. And there was no one in the room except the Doctor, Branscombe, Bob Willis, and myself. There was no trace of Millicent.

The Doctor stood, drenched with sweat, exactly where he had been when Millicent first screamed. Bob Willis was lying back on the floor, unconscious, and badly bruised from Branscombe's fists.

"Get him upstairs to bed," said Martinus.

He and Branscombe took the unconscious man by the shoulders and feet and carried him out of the room. I sank down in a chair, utterly exhausted physically, and yet with a light, exultant feeling. I felt that whatever forces of evil had been in that room had been finally overthrown.

It was more than an hour before the two men came down.

"He's sleeping soundly now," said Martinus. "I am going to stay here 'til tomorrow and look after him. That, Mr. Kains, was one of the closest calls I've had in all my professional experience."

AFTER a while he grew communicative. "That Jap," he said, "was from the Shinto temple at Osaka, a famous spiritualistic shrine. I recognized him immediately by the brand they put upon their priests. You didn't notice the little scar under the ear? He knew I knew him. No doubt he was the prime mover in the whole diabolical business, for it is an article of fanaticism with these gentry to serve devils and help them to incarnate. He got away when he saw his was a losing cause. How your friend picked him up I don't know yet. It may have been chance, or the Jap may have known that there was work for him here."

"But the woman—Millicent!" I exclaimed.

"You were close on the track, Mr. Kains, when you suggested that she was the spirit of Marjory Willis, materialized. I've been talking with Bob Willis' subconscious mind while he has been asleep. It appears that the Jap first suggested to him the possibility of materializing the spirit of the dead woman, until she became able to retain the human form she had built up, by careful practice, and bear the light of day.

"Well, Mr. Kains, when your friend had got to the point where he believed he could deceive his friends, he tried it on you, as his first experiment. Unfortunately for himself, the creature had not yet succeeded in assuming the human form and substance strongly enough. Hence the red light, and what you noticed as the dissolving head."

"But I knew Marjory, and I tell you that creature was a devil!" I cried.

"Exactly," answered the Doctor. "As all such apparitions almost invariably are, masquerading in the guise of a loved one who has passed over. She was one of the foul brood of Lilith. Bob Willis, in fact, is lucky to be alive right now."

"Yes, dear—I now work for 'Uncle Sam.' Today I received appointment.

"Tomorrow, I go out on my first Railway Mail run to Washington, D. C. From now on I will travel on pass and see my country. Do you know dear that over 15,000 young men and women are appointed in the Postoffice Service every year."

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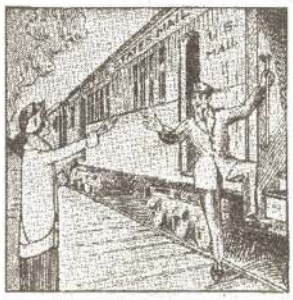

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TRUE GHOST EXPERIENCES

Have you ever seen a ghost? Have you ever had a message from the dead?

Nearly every person in the world 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 to them which could not be explained logically.

This department is for the readers of GHOST STORIES Magazine who believe they have had some contact with the spirit world, and they are urged to send in accounts of such experiences. As many as possible of the letters will be published; and if any of the letters call for an explanation, perhaps some of our readers will be glad to write that also to this department. One of these letters is printed below—and readers are urged to send in their answers. It must be made clear that we will not consider dreams.

GHOST STORIES wants the account of your experience. Send letters to True Ghost Experiences Editor, GHOST STORIES Magazine, 1926 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

In Flanders' Fields

A FEW weeks ago while sitting in a crowded barber shop I observed the September number of your GHOST STORIES Magazine for the first time and I was thrilled by the story called *Jim Meade's $50,000 Ghost*. I myself once had a similar experience while serving with the Twenty-first Canadian Infantry in Flanders in 1915.

I have since wondered if it is possible that material bodies are sometimes operated by a spiritual power—including spiritual eyes that can penetrate and observe the departed after death.

Though I had traveled extensively since infancy, sometimes as a tramp, sometimes as a deep sea sailorman, at other times as a mechanic; and had visited many of Europe's greatest cities and every principal city in the U. S. A., and Canada, the *unknown* and its possibilities had never had any interest to me. That is—not until the night of December 28, 1915. On this particular night our front lines were hip-deep in water, caused from heavy rains and constant shell fire.

Every other man of four companies were taken out on a working party—building a communication trench that started a mile in the rear of the front lines, thus leaving only three men on duty in every bay of our front, with but one man up on lookout while the other two slept hunched up on the firing step.

With no listening post out in front it was my duty to make my way along our company front lines, taking reports from sentry up, and keep a sharp lookout to see that no one passed through our empty bays, or tampered with our wire. After wading the full length of our company front and getting the report that all was well, I started back, thankful for the bright beams of the most wonderful full moon I ever remembered seeing. It lit up No Man's Land out in front and the waste land of shell holes in our rear.

No artillery being in action, other than an odd, rat-tee, tat-tat, of a machine gun, all around was a dead-like stillness.

Suddenly I was startled by the noise of something that sounded like a rush of wind coming down through the trench in my rear. I turned like a flash, bringing my rifle into position with bayonet fixed, and my finger on the hair-trigger, ready to start the fireworks. Imagine my surprise to see standing twenty feet from me, on the rear side of our trench, my own father, whom I had left alive and well in our little home in Buffalo, New York.

Being startled, I called aloud, "Why, Dad!" and stood as if petrified, looking up into his eyes that seemed to be taking in my surroundings. All the while I felt a strange, unusual feeling, slowly pass through my whole body.

Standing as I was, near hip-deep in mud and water, with the moon at my back, the thought flashed through my mind that someone was standing in my rear. Suiting action to the thought, I turned and sprung for the firing step of the bay, and having gained it, I peered over the top.

Seeing nothing, I turned just in time to see my father fading out—that is, he seemed to move backward rapidly without ever moving either hand or foot. I jumped down, crossed through the water and climbed over the rear of the trench and followed about twenty yards, calling "Dad! Dad!" I could still discern his faint outline, then suddenly he vanished.

BEWILDERED, I halted. How long I stood there I can't say. After a time I returned, entering the trench where I went out. I observed my own foot prints there, but I could find no others. I continued down along the line to meet my relief making his way along through the water, and damning this and that and everything connected with Belgium, the war and every one in it.

After giving him my report, including the pass-word, which by the way was "Stonewall Jackson," and enjoying a good laugh at my relief's remarks about ghosts, Stonewall Jackson, the Germans, the army, et cetera, I waded back to a machine gun position that was high and dry.

I stretched out and tried to sleep, but could not, so decided on finding a dry dug-out, which I did after another hour of floundering around.

It happened to be the first-aid dug-out whose four stretcher bearers had turned in for the night. After some time I located a small piece of candle stuck on a board. I lit it and after getting some writing paper which we always carried in a haversack, I started writing a letter to a sister at home, stating my experience of the night of December 28, 1915.

Strange—but true—we were both writing at the same hour, she in Buffalo, I in Belgium. Anyway, our letters crossed and in a week or so, I received a letter dated December 28, 1915, in which my sister stated that our Dad had passed away from a stroke at 6:30 P. M., December 28, 1915. Allowing for the difference in time between Buffalo, New York, and Belgium (about five hours), our departed parent had visited me in the trenches of Flanders within an hour of the time he died.

Now, after reading your magazine, and studying the question: "Have you any justification for your claim that you can materialize a being from another world?"—which I suppose means after death—I will say that I don't think so—not yet. But I am positive that my visitor of that early morning was my father—dressed as I had very often seen him dressed, twenty years previous, in a suit which, when he appeared, did not exist or had not existed for over ten years before his death.

Never yet having been a slave to man's conception of what is to follow this life, with its wars and famines, and its life-long struggle for annihilation of ignorance and poverty, I would be very much pleased to receive your opinion of my true ghost story.

W. J. McG.

The Soul Destroyers

(*Continued from page 11*)

to Latonia by Travers' secretary, to take charge of the case.

"It is rather a daring idea, gentlemen," he said in his grave, mild voice; "but there is a possibility of it succeeding. As things stand now, Professor Travers lacks the will or the desire to live."

The others nodded. Courteau studied the virile features of the criminologist-scientist soberly, shrugging his shoulders.

"You may proceed, Mr. Keith. There is no time to lose."

He made a sign to the nurse, and the woman conducted the detective and the girl down a long corridor, and into a room in which Travers lay, pale and emaciated, his eyes closed. At the bedside was his aged mother, her eyes heavy from lack of sleep, and a nurse who was taking a pulse reading.

WHILE the two nurses conferred in hushed tones, Keith approached Mrs. Travers, taking her hand silently.

"Oh, Harry!" she whispered; "I'm so glad you're here! Can't you—do something——"

The figure on the bed stirred slightly, and Keith put a finger to his lips, motioning for her to leave the bed. She followed him to a far corner of the room, glancing at the girl in black.

"Mary!" she exclaimed.

The girl took the aged woman in her arms, kissing her.

"You poor dear; you're all tired out. We—brother and I—came to see if we could save Edwin."

She outlined in a hurried whisper the scheme that she had conceived, and which Keith had approved of as a last resort which might snatch his friend from death. Mary Keith and Evelyn Grover had attended the same college together, and had been room-mates.

"I am sure I can imitate Evelyn's voice," she said. "If he can believe that I am Evelyn, we might save him."

There was a faint moan from the bed, and Keith motioned to his sister, tip-toeing toward Travers. She pushed back her veil, following him, the two nurses and Mrs. Travers remaining in the background. The stricken man was mumbling something faintly. Keith, a practiced lip-reader, knew that he was trying to pronounce the name of Evelyn. He darted over to the window quickly and pulled the shade two-thirds of the way down, returning to the bed.

"Now, Mary!" he whispered.

The girl took a deep breath, and approached the bed, placing her hand gently upon Travers' forehead, stooping over him.

"Edwin—Edwin!" she cried, her voice studied, but trembling slightly.

The muscles of the pale face twitched nervously, and the eyelids trembled.

"Edwin," she repeated, "it is I—Evelyn. Can't you hear me? I am safe. I escaped, darling——"

Her voice broke, and she turned to meet Keith's tense gaze.

"Keep it up!" he whispered; "don't give—ah!"

Travers' lips were moving, soundlessly.

"He says 'is it true?' Mary——" Keith urged her on with a quick look. "Keep it up; whisper in his ears."

"Of course it's true, dear. And now you must get well. And you mustn't ask questions, Edwin."

The eyelids trembled again, and opened, the green-gray eyes striving to discern her features. It was a moment that was fraught with suspense. The lips moved again, as with a mighty effort. Swiftly Keith read them, whispering in his sister's ear:

"'Dark,' he says; 'can't see you very well.'"

"Just close your eyes, dear, and don't talk. You must get strong now, dear; save your strength. Do you promise?" said Mary gently.

The features of the stricken man relaxed. He sighed, and a faint smile hovered on his blanched lips. His eyes closed, a light surge of color tinging the pale cheeks. Keith leaned forward as the lips moved:

"'Will you stay here?' he wants to know."

She hesitated a moment. Keith nodded his head vigorously.

"Of course I will, dear," she exclaimed; "right here. And now you will become well and strong again, and not wonder how I escaped, or ask questions? Relax completely and conserve your strength——"

TRAVERS' lips moved again. Swiftly Keith interpreted:

"'I'll get well—again—only, stay by me, dear.'"

"Nothing can make me leave," she exclaimed.

With a quick movement she leaned over and kissed him softly. "Nothing, dearest," she added.

Travers sighed contentedly, smiling. As they stood tensely watching, he dropped into slumber.

Keith gripped his powerful hands together.

"Thank God!" he muttered.

He turned to find the aged mother swaying, trembling in a paroxysm of emotion. Placing an arm about her he helped her out of the room, one of the nurses following solicitously.

Mary drew up a chair beside the bed, her eyes wet with tears, studying the sleeping patient. She had cheated death! Yes—she had cheated him too, perhaps. Could she keep up the deception until he was strong again—out of danger? The thought troubled her, but she banished it from her mind. The future must take care of itself. The nurse felt his pulse, and smiled.

THANKS to the resourceful mind of Harrison Keith, an expedient was hit upon that made it easier for his young sister to continue the playing of her difficult role in this drama of life and death.

Travers' eyes were bandaged. Doctor Courteau, when the Professor asked the reason, said that his sight had been threatened.

"Then that—that Devil did that to me, too? Well, thank God, Evelyn is out of his clutches."

The deception remained complete, though once he remarked that her voice sounded strange. Her quick wit saved the situation with the announcement that she had a bad cold.

The hope of the city hung upon Travers' recovery, for from the information that he might furnish regarding the activities of the *Red Circle* and his own recent experiences, the police would perhaps be able to pick up the trail of Tracy and his followers. His testimony was anxiously awaited.

But as he improved, he began to ask many questions. Fortunately for Mary, Travers had many visitors, including his mother, Jacobs, his devoted secretary, and a cousin who had come down from Montreal.

One day, Travers, well on the road to recovery, asked that his bandage be removed for a moment so that he could "see Evelyn." Doctor Courteau, cognizant of Mary's frantic gesture, put him off. The request was repeated on the next occasion that she called, accompanied by her brother.

"My eyes feel all right," he expostulated. "I want to see you, dear, if only for a moment."

He argued with Doctor Courteau and Keith on the matter with a tenacity of mind that was characteristic of him. In vain did they strive to discourage him, giving various reasons why the bandage should remain.

"Harry," Travers cried, "I can see different shades of light in this room through this gauze. I can see your figures moving about. There is nothing the matter with my eyes."

Keith remonstrated with him, his mind working swiftly. Why couldn't Mary pretend that 'her mother' had been taken suddenly ill in Washington? He glanced at the doctor, smiling.

"Well, Edwin," he said, "if you really think your eyes can stand the light, perhaps in a few days, or even tomorrow——"

Doctor Courteau was equal to the situation.

"I think that tomorrow, Professor, we shall remove part of the bandage. Perhaps all of it."

Travers sighed.

"Tomorrow? Very well. It's all I can do to keep from tearing it off now, but I suppose I can wait that long."

THE next morning, the Doctor, accompanied by Keith, entered the sick-room. The bandage was removed. Travers stared around at them for a moment, and asked them to put up the shade.

"Why, I see perfectly!" he exclaimed.

"But too much light——" the Doctor began.

"Nonsense. Put the shade up. I'm all right."

Keith gave a tug at the string and the shade rolled to the top.

"Haven't lost any of your old stubbornness, have you?" he laughed. "How is that?"

Travers nodded.

"Fine." He studied the athletic figure of Keith in admiration. "By George, Harry, you certainly look fit. It's won-

derful to see you again, and now that——"

Doctor Courteau held up a protesting hand.

"You must not exercise your voice so much, Professor. If you don't conserve your strength——"

Travers laughed, glancing again at Keith.

"Nonsense. Within a week I'll be able to lick the stuffing out of Harry."

The two men smiled affectionately at each other. Theirs was a friendship that had begun in boyhood, and had continued through school and college. They had drifted apart in recent years, pursuing their separate careers. Keith, with an insatiable craving for adventure, had thrown aside his medical studies, entering the diplomatic service during the World War, distinguishing himself by serving three different countries as an agent. Now he headed a celebrated detective agency.

Travers' inclinations had led him into the intensive studies of philosophy, psychology, and later, spiritistic and occult subjects. While engaged in investigating spirit manifestations, the various and varied theories concerning the survival of the soul and kindred subjects, he had written, more for his own enlightenment, a series of books. These, treatises on philosophy, mental science and metaphysics, had aroused considerable comment. There had been many re-print editions, and his works had been translated into several foreign languages.

Harrison Keith was the older of the two — thirty-eight. Travers was nearly thirty-three—both of them rather young to have achieved the distinctive positions they held in the world.

"Where is Evelyn?" Travers asked anxiously.

Keith explained that she had been forced to leave abruptly on account of her mother's illness in Washington, adding that she would write to him every day. But though he had prepared himself to answer possible questions Travers might ask, he was hardly prepared for the question his friend suddenly put to him:

"Harry! why are you lying to me?"

Keith concealed his astonishment with a supreme effort. But if the query surprised him, he was more amazed at the strange expression that had come over Travers' face.

"What makes you ask that, Edwin?"

He knew that his voice sounded forced. Travers' keen eyes were fixing his own with a strange intensity.

"I don't know why you should try to deceive me, Harry. Perhaps you've meant well——"

He raised himself weakly upon one elbow, staring with a strained expression toward the door.

"Why, Edwin——" began Keith.

"There's Evelyn now," Travers gasped, pointing to the closed door with a trembling hand.

The detective started, wheeling. Excepting Travers, the Doctor, and himself, there was no other person——

Person?

A very faint mist seemed to be moving slowly through the door—a tall, tenuous column of a transparent and vaporish substance!

Keith stood like one rooted to the floor, muscles tense, mouth agape. Doctor Courteau gave an exclamation, and stepped backward, crossing himself.

"Evelyn!" Travers cried, his voice anguished, trembling.

The substance advanced swiftly toward him. Keith recoiled as it brushed his shoulder, a numbing chill affecting the shoulder and side. Then the floating mass seemed to take a grotesque position beside the bed, like—a person kneeling!

Travers gave a sobbing cry, rising to a sitting position, staring at the wraith-like cloud.

"Evelyn!" he cried; "oh, my God! They've still got you!— Tracy——"

His eyes gleamed, and he glared wrathfully at Keith, his hands tearing away the covers.

"Curse you!" he screamed, his thin lips working savagely; "you've been deceiving me all these days. Look—there she is!" he cried, breathing quickly, leaning toward the eerie substance. "It's her astral body. Do you understand?—oh——"

He shuddered, and fell back weakly against the pillow. The ghostly vapor rose to its former position, and started to move away.

"Follow her—Harry!" gasped Travers. "For—God's—sake, follow—her——"

He tried to rise, and dropped back unconscious.

Keith struggled with the inertia that gripped him as the Doctor gave a hoarse cry, the phantom moving through him and melting into the wall.

"Dieu—avec nous——" Doctor Courteau cried.

With a mighty effort, Keith, shook off the paralyzing lethargy, and moved as if under a heavy weight toward the door. But he could not open it. This for a very good reason.

It was locked—from the outside!

PROTRUDING beneath the door was a triangular edge of white paper. With fingers that trembled slightly he seized the corner, pulling an envelope into view. On the face of it was scrawled his name.

He tore it open quickly, withdrawing a sheet of paper on which was a large red circle. Printed in red ink in the area of the circle was the message:

Meddling Fool:
Do you imagine that I would have permitted Travers to die? I have other things in store for him, and for you, Mr. Keith.

R. T.

HARRISON KEITH was not of a temperament that acknowledged either fear or defeat, though he had been momentarily spellbound by the appearance of the ectoplasmic, transparent shape. But the sardonic note he held in his hand was something tangible, as was the fact that the door had been locked. Both of these elements, instead of shaking his courage, intensified it. The old surge of battle, of matching wits against wits, as he had a thousand times as an international spy, welled up within him. It was the spirit that had made him a college football sensation a decade and a half before.

He squared his muscular shoulders, wheeling to face the trembling Doctor.

"Come, Doctor Courteau, pull yourself together. We must make a thorough inspection of the sanitarium."

The Doctor's head bobbed from side to side in an extremity of panic, his face the color of ashes, eyes wide with terror. He watched the athletic figure of the detective blankly as Keith strode to the bed and bent over the still form of his friend, feeling his pulse.

"B—but that—that strange vapor——" the Doctor gasped. "It—passed right through me; was as if—as if I had been surrounded by a fog of liquid air, freezing——"

Keith forced a contemptuous laugh.

"Well, it's gone now. The first thing we must do," he said crisply, nodding toward Travers, "is to see that he is given constant care and attention, and perhaps moved to different surroundings."

He walked over and gripped the doctor's shoulders with his powerful hands. The professional instinct of the little man mounted feebly, struggling to throw off the icy cloak of horror that had enveloped his being.

"Yes—yes, of course. By all means, he must be moved."

He shuddered. Keith frowned, shaking him.

"Doctor," he said solemnly, "human lives are in the balance. Seven people have died within the past few weeks, victims of Tracy and his damnable *Red Circle*. Mrs. Grover and her daughter are missing, their country home in ruins. We must all unite to crush this organization."

Doctor Courteau nodded weakly.

"What was—that note you got just now?"

Keith handed it to him with a grim smile.

"A missive from our friend Tracy. Calls me a 'meddlesome fool'—says he has other things in store for Travers and I."

He laughed contemptuously, striding toward the door, extracting a thin pair of pincers from his pocket and inserting them in the key-hole.

"Good Heavens!" the Doctor cried; it's a warning; the *Red Circle!*"

Keith only grunted, turning the key over with his pincers, and flinging the door open.

"Tracy," he said, "is an egotistical ass, with a penchant for theatricalism and melodrama."

He called to a nurse who was emerging from one of the adjoining rooms, giving terse instructions. All of the consulting physicians and psychologists who had been attending Travers were to be summoned at once. His secretary, John O'Hara, was to be sent for, as were Lieutenant Samuels and Sergeant Parker of the Latonia Police Department.

AN hour later Travers was moved to another wing of the building, still unconscious. His blood-pressure was very low, and his pulse weak. The subject of blood-transfusion was discussed earnestly, but discarded as inadvisable for the present. Some hope was held out that he could be induced to assimulate nourishment, for he was declared to be organically sound. The expedient of a serum treatment was broached in the event that nourishment could not be satisfactorily given.

The chief concern of the physicians and alienists was Travers' mind. Consciousness was awaited anxiously.

Keith was not one to do things by halves. At his suggestion, the police established a guard around the sanitarium. Hospital attendants were given explicit instructions, among them being the order that on no occasion was Travers to be left alone, night or day.

It was a grim quintette that gathered in the office of Samuels, Lieutenant of Detectives. The Lieutenant, Sergeant Parker, Commissioner George McCaffrey, Keith, and his secretary, John O'Hara, were discussing the many angles of the case behind locked doors. A new feature had arisen to further disturb the equanimity of the city. Judge Oscar B. Canfield, who had presided over the trial of Tracy and the two Arabians and passed sentence upon them, was missing from his home.

"It's all positively uncanny," McCaffrey exclaimed. "Fancy a twentieth century metropolis menaced by a cult of Devil worshippers!"

His round face was pale. The shadows under his feverish eyes gave indications that he had passed many sleepless nights.

"None of us," he muttered, shuddering, "know when our own turn might come."

Keith gave an exclamation of annoyance.

"Why don't you resign and go away?" he snapped, with characteristic bluntness. "If your nerves have given way under the strain, perhaps it would be the thing to do."

McCaffrey shook his head sadly.

"No; I owe something to the public. I'll stick it out."

There was an embarrassed silence. All of them were well aware of the fact that this same public was agitating for his recall. But while a politician, there was something in him of the indomitable spirit of the old South, a code of honor that bound his quaking spirit to his constituted duties.

Lieutenant Samuels and his aide, Sergeant Parker, were of that fortunate, unimaginative type, who recognized only realities of the three dimensional mind. Shrewd in their way, and fearless, their intelligences only scoffed at the supernatural angles of the case, concentrating on the more tangible things.

"All this spooky stuff," grunted Samuels, "is out."

He favored Keith with a respectful glance.

"I mean no offense, Mr. Keith," he added. "What you've told us about that cloud of smoke, or whatever it was you saw, I don't question for a minute, coming from you. Of course it's something hard to understand and explain, and it may be that Ronald Tracy has invented some sort of floating gas. We can forget that, for the time being, and use common sense. The note you found under the door is different; it's something more definite. Have you any theories on the case?"

Keith shrugged, smiling at his secretary.

"I am sorry, Samuels, but I keep my theories to myself. Like you, I am inclined to trust to my logic. After all, my interest in the situation is not official, and is merely brought about by my friendship with Professor Travers. Our objects, however, are the same—to scatter this Devil cult and to place Tracy and his confederates behind the bars—this time to stay."

Commissioner McCaffrey remarked that he—and he felt that his associates concurred—valued the noted criminologist's counsel. Whatever the nature of Tracy's power, human or supernatural, the fiend and his cult were a menace that must be wiped from the face of the earth.

THE discussion was interrupted at this point by the arrival of Gordon Gleason, Secret Service officer, who had, together with six assistants, combed the state in an effort to uncover the rendezvous of the *Red Circle*.

Gleason was grave and taciturn, stating shortly that he had nothing to report that would throw any light on the case.

"Well, Judge Canfield is missing now," Samuels observed. "It looks like Tracy is bent on wreaking vengeance upon everyone who contributed to his recent capture and trial. The entire department is spread out over the city, every man on the alert. I only wish that it was possible to get some information out of Travers."

Keith stated that the Professor was in no condition now to discuss his experiences.

"If he hadn't had this relapse, we might have learned something from him, but frankly, I doubt if there would have been anything tangible to work on."

He rose, O'Hara pocketing some notes he had made and rising also. Keith laid an affectionate hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Jack O'Hara, gentlemen," he addressed the others, "seems to think that our greatest hope lies in the recovery of Edwin Travers."

O'Hara nodded emphatically.

"Professor Travers is no fool," he exclaimed. "Better than any other person, he understands Tracy and his methods. As I look at it, Tracy himself seems to take a pleasure in matching his wits with Travers; like a cat playing with a mouse."

The others nodded. O'Hara's fists clenched, and his jaw became tense.

"The *Red Circle* killed my brothers, Tim and Michael, as you know. Both were members of the force here. Well, the ambition of my life is to feel the throat of that fiend Tracy under my fingers."

He looked at Keith, his face tense with emotion. The detective put an arm about him, his eyes flashing.

"Jack is the other reason why I have interested myself in this case," he told the men. "This young man and I have been associated together for eight years."

The others well knew the thrilling events that had thrown Keith and O'Hara together in Constantinople. O'Hara, then a youth of nineteen, was serving on the staff of the Paris edition of the New York *Standard*. Keith had become embroiled in an international intrigue while acting as an intelligence officer for Great Britain, holding at the same time a number under Zimmerman, the canny German who was head of teutonic operations in the United States and Mexico. Through a whim of fate or chance, the youth had managed to save Keith's life, and they had been inseparable companions ever since.

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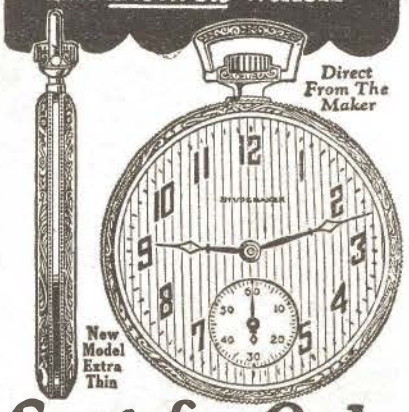

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"I believe, gentlemen," Keith remarked, "that it is only a matter of time before we shall get on the trail of these criminals. What is needed now is action, and considerable concentration. Yes, and no little wariness, for though Tracy is doubtless a madman, he is an intelligent, shrewd, crafty one. All of my resources will be put into the fight, both men and money. My New York office is busy, and I have agents at strategic points where they may best gain the information I desire. Something is bound to turn up before long——"

Something did. This came in the form of a light rapping on the door.

Samuels released the catch and a policeman entered, red and excited.

"They've found Judge Canfield!" he cried, trembling, his eyes staring wildly at the grim circle of faces; "he's in the morgue now."

McCaffrey shuddered and grew pale, a hand darting involuntarily to his throat.

"My God——"

"What happened to him?" Lieutenant Samuels snapped.

"He—he committed suicide; jumped from the tenth story of the Kummel Building. And——"

He fumbled in a pocket with shaking fingers, drawing out a small round object.

"This was on his finger."

The light glistened on its lacquered surface, throwing off a crimson glow. It was a red ring.

IT was a week after the death of Judge Canfield that word was given out to the effect that Edwin Travers was strong enough to answer questions.

Harrison Keith, O'Hara, Gleason, and Samuels were admitted by Doctor Courteau, finding Travers sitting up in bed, busily reading some notes to his secretary, who was seated near the bedside, swiftly operating a portable typewriter. Travers looked up as they entered, inclining his head.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," he said; "I have just about finished my account. Please be seated a moment."

A nurse brought chairs for them, and they sat down in silence while Travers made a few more remarks to the man at his side. Then he turned to regard them, smiling at Keith.

"Well, Harry, I see you're surprised at my improvement."

Keith admitted that he was, rising and taking the hand of his friend in his muscular fingers.

"How did you do it?" he asked.

Travers shrugged grimly.

"I realized that Evelyn is being held by Tracy. I made Doctor Courteau tell me the truth about what has happened during the past three weeks—things you have all kept from me. Now I must regain my strength."

He pointed to a heap of newspapers on a taboret.

"For the past two days I have occupied myself with studying the terrible things that have taken place. None of you has accomplished one single thing. Nothing. But can you sit in a boat on an ocean a mile deep and discern fish swimming along the bottom?"

They glanced at one another in bewilderment.

"Oh, don't think I'm mad," Travers cried, a trace of exasperation in his voice; "I am not in the humor to make meaningless parables. This one has a meaning, as you will perhaps understand when these notes I have made are read. Jacobs here has made five copies. Each of you will be given one, with the understanding that they are not for publication. And I wish that some effort will be made to convince the newspapers that I shall make no public statements at this time."

Samuels nodded emphatically.

"I'll take care of that, Professor. But——" He wrinkled his forehead. "What did you mean about this boat and ocean business?"

Travers smiled indulgently.

"The men in the boat, Lieutenant, live in the atmospheric envelope of the earth's surface. The fish live in a different world—in the ocean. Men cannot live long under water, nor can fish live long on land. But men," he continued with a low emphasis, "sometimes go down in diving-suits."

He glanced at Keith with an enigmatical smile. The detective patted him on the shoulder, laughing.

"Well put, Edwin. The inference is plain enough. We have to contend with a different world, so to speak?"

"Exactly," Travers said, reaching for the typed sheets Jacobs handed him. He shuffled the copies together, placing a clip on each, and Gleason and Samuels rose and advanced toward the bed.

Travers handed one to the Lieutenant and one to the Secret Service officer. A third he gave to Keith, keeping the other two copies.

"You will find this account somewhat hard to believe in spots, but it is a faithful record. I don't know what your reactions may be, and how much of it you will understand. At any rate, it is a complete record of my experiences, beginning with the day I left my hotel, and up to the time when I was found by Officer Casey in the capitol grounds. And now," he added, "I must ask you to take this information with you. If there are any further things you might wish to know, I can answer them tomorrow."

THEY moved toward the door. Keith lingered after the others had gone, O'Hara waiting at the entrance.

"You're looking much better, Edwin," he said. He glanced toward the Doctor. "Did he tell you about the hoax I foisted upon you?"

Travers smiled, squeezing his hand.

"No, you big-hearted Titan, but Mother did—yesterday. I must confess that it was rather clever of you and Mary. Where is she, by the way?"

Keith mentioned that his sister had gone to Washington to take care of some business for him. They chatted for a while about old times, though Keith noticed that his friend's heart was heavy.

"Of course you're worried about Evelyn," he exclaimed.

Travers nodded, looking gravely at him.

"I suppose you thought I had gone mad the day that ghostly mist entered my room. You saw it, didn't you?"

Keith admitted that he had. Courteau paled.

"I did, also," he exclaimed.

"Well, what did you make of it?" demanded Travers testily, his green-gray eyes containing an ironic gleam of humor.

"Not a great deal," Keith admitted without hesitation. "It is one of those things that defy an explanation, though there must be some reason for it."

"And you, Doctor?" Travers queried.

The physician shrugged.

"It was something new in my experience, Professor. In fact, I sometimes wonder if I was dreaming."

Travers laughed grimly.

"It is the way of science," he said dryly, "to regard with skepticism anything inalienable to the material world, even going so far as to distrust the evidences of their senses. They are afraid to tread on new ground. Even forgetting spirits and such things for a moment, take the case where a number of small green frogs rained down from a cloudless sky some years ago in Newton, Massachusetts. Experts declared that the variety was entirely unknown. The strange occurrence was investigated for a while, and finally dropped altogether. Never explained."

He sighed.

"Human logic only goes a short way," he said solemnly. "Perhaps, it is fortunate, in a way. But there are vibrations, sounds, colors—stratas of existence that the mortal senses cannot record."

His features tensed.

"Jacobs," he said, motioning toward his secretary, "is a young man of intelligence. He is versed in astronomy, higher mathematics, and was well grounded materially when he answered my advertisement two years ago for a secretary—out of curiosity."

He smiled, and the young man laughed.

"That is so," he admitted. "I thought I would be amused, but I was mystified and intrigued instead. Now I am more mystified and more interested than ever. I feel with Professor Travers that we are on the very threshold of a vast, unseen world."

A HALF hour later, Keith, locked in the study of the bungalow he had rented, drew from his pocket the typed notes, spreading them out on the desk. But as he settled back to read them, he was conscious of a vague but insistent sense of uneasiness. His eyes wandered from the notes, and he was cognizant of the fact that the light in the room had altered slightly. Instinctively Keith turned toward the window.

Standing outside, its face close against the pane, was a figure clothed from head to foot in black. Between the outspread hands on the glass, through the black enveloping shroud, Keith, in that instant, thought he could discern two gleaming, jade-colored eyes—eyes that strangely reminded him of the arch fiend, Ronald Tracy!

Afterwards, Keith speculated on the length of time he had sat immobile, staring out at the specter, with its luminous green eyes, before he had reached for the gun he always kept at hand. In reality, only the fraction of a second elapsed from the time he first discerned the black shape and the crash of the window as the bullet from his automatic sped through.

Yet, in that interval, the figure had darted aside.

The sheer audacity of the occurrence annoyed the detective. Here it was a little past four in the afternoon—broad day-

light. Still this somber shape had appeared on his lawn, without arousing the two bloodhounds he kept in the yard. Even his secretary failed to put in an appearance during the interval Keith spent in examining the exterior.

The grass outside had been closely mowed, but though he was able to make out faint impressions, it was impossible to determine the outlines of footprints. Moreover, he and O'Hara and his sister had walked about the premises considerably.

Keith stared towards the back of the yard at the two bloodhounds, who were lazily reclining near their kennels, their eyes upon him. He called to them, and they rose slowly and reluctantly, stretching themselves, and trotted toward him.

A policeman came running up to the fence as Keith stood studying the two dogs.

"Yes, I fired the shot. A masked prowler. Did you see anyone running away from here, dressed in a black hood and cloak?"

The policeman hadn't, but he had observed a young man running from the alley-way on the opposite side of the street."

"The opposite side!" exclaimed the detective.

"Yes sir." The officer was plainly agitated; more, since he recognized the noted criminologist. "There was a big red sedan turning the corner, and he darted out and jumped on the spare tire rack. Then the car picked up speed, and shot down the street, disappearing around the next corner."

THE detective questioned him swiftly. Yes, the officer had noted the number of the license-plate. He must call Headquarters immediately; a red sedan was conspicuous enough to attract attention. . . The young man? Why, he had been dressed in a dark blue suit, with a gray cap. He had tossed aside a small package he had been carrying; this was it.

Keith seized the package quickly, breaking the string and removing the wrapper, revealing a typewriter ribbon and a box of rubber-bands—items that his secretary had mentioned needing. But hadn't O'Hara returned from his errand a few minutes ago? He had heard him open the front door, humming a tune, as he often did. . .

He stared at the dogs, who were watching the officer, growling.

"Anything I can do, sir?" the policeman asked.

Keith shook his head, running toward the front of the house.

"Wait outside; don't come in the yard. The dogs, you know."

He sprang up the steps, flinging open the door and entering.

"Jack!"

But no one answered his call, and a swift examination of the house revealed that O'Hara had not returned. As he started out again, his eye caught sight of a black object on the library table. He studied it sharply without touching it. It was a black cardboard box, about a half-inch thick and two inches square. What did it contain?

With a prudence born of experience, he refrained from picking it up. Someone—perhaps the same hooded figure he had seen at the library window—had entered the house, imitating O'Hara's low humming, and had left this little box. But how had a stranger been able to prowl about without arousing the hounds.

He heard them barking now at the policeman, and went to the door. Dismissing the waiting officer with a few remarks, he returned to the table, his brow wrinkled with thought. It was a plain box, constructed in two pieces, the lid removable after the manner of a pill-box. Yet it seemed to have a mysterious attraction, vague and undefinable.

Slowly he reached a hand forward. As he did so, one of the dogs outside gave a long, mournful howl. He paused, struck by the odd nuance of tone in the sound, and as he listened both of the hounds howled in unison.

He frowned. There was something the matter with those dogs. Their movements had been rather sluggish, he had noted.

BENT on discovering if they had been drugged or poisoned, he went outside. But they sprang to greet him, jumping about with celerity. Their cold noses brushed his hand; their tails wagged briskly. One of them made a leap after a fly, his powerful jaws snapping.

Keith walked to the kennels, the dogs trailing behind. Here he examined the bare area of earth, and was rewarded by the sight of some odd, gigantic footprints. They seemed to start from the back fence, directly behind the kennels.

(*Continued on page 94*)

On a Haunted Piano

(*Continued from page 16*)

Did a startled expression flit over Miss Rebecca's face? If so, it went instantly. She smiled, but my question remained unanswered.

And in this fashion, I went to live at the old Whitson home.

COMING in one afternoon, after a busy day at the office, I loitered on the front piazza to drink in, greedily, the loveliness and lushness of early summer. The tulip trees were in bloom; so were the stately magnolias. Roses and gardenias nodded to me from the garden, and even a few belated wisteria blooms still hung from the immense vine which seemed to be aspiring to cover Atlanta, so insistently and persistently did it climb over everything in sight.

Suddenly, I heard faint music; it came from within the house. "We must have a visitor," I thought, for with the exception of myself, we had no pianists in the house. As I stepped into the hall, the music became clearer; I even recognized the old air—an old Scotch ballad. A low, sweet voice was singing *We'd Better Bide a Wee.*

Curious to know who was playing and singing, and at that hour, I walked slowly down the hall and into the old salon. Instantly, the music ceased, and to my utter bewilderment I perceived that the room was empty. I walked over to the old rosewood piano; it was closed. As I stood there, a faint sighing seemed to fill my ears, and very distinctly I heard the sound of running water. A curious tingling of my nerves, then a peculiar "awareness" of something or someone—there by that old instrument. I was not alone in that charming old room. The old house had its *presence*—and I . . . I had received my second salutation.

I found myself upstairs and in my room, presently. After the first shock had worn off, I decided to keep my amazing experience to myself, for a while. The average person rather scoffs at psychic happenings — even one's friends are rather apt to smile and murmur something about nerves and working too hard. Deeply interested, personally, I rather wondered what would happen next.

However, on several occasions thereafter, I tried to lead Miss Rebecca into conversation regarding the old rosewood piano. I admired it; jokingly threatened to steal it, were it not too big to lug off conveniently, and finally begged outright for its history. Rather reluctantly, it seemed, she gave it to me:

The old instrument had belonged to a sister of Miss Rebecca's father. Her name was Edith. The piano had been left to her by a wealthy aunt, for whom she had been named, together with some very fine old jewelry and silver, and a string of really valuable pearls—perfectly matched and of a pinkish tinge. The piano had been a wedding present to the first Edith, from her husband. Some years later, he had been drowned at sea. Great-Aunt Edith never recovered from the shock of her husband's tragic going, and soon followed him into that other world.

The second Edith had had an unhappy love affair, just around the Civil War period. She disappeared on her wedding night and no trace of her had ever been found. She had gone—that was all. Her fate had long troubled her family. The beautiful string of pearls had vanished, along with Edith. Possibly, she had worn them when she went to her fate—whatever it was—one of those mysteries that seem to await eternity to be understood.

The piano now belonged to Miss Rebecca, as the last of her family. She had been offered considerable money for it, on several occasions, but could never bring herself to part with it. Though not a musician herself, it seemed a part of the family, so closely interwoven was its history with that of those two sad women—the two Ediths.

BOTH Ediths had been talented musicians, and the younger one had dearly loved her beautiful instrument of expression, often spending hours at its keyboard.

Not once did Miss Rebecca mention ghosts, or any supernatural music. I hesitated, then ventured: "Have you, or any other member of your family, ever heard any unusual music, or seen anything

in the way of an apparition, in connection with that old piano, Miss Rebecca?"

A long minute elapsed, then she answered, "Well . . . yes. During my mother's lifetime, she often told me that she was quite sure that Edith had come back to play on her beloved piano. You see, my mother had known and loved Aunt Edith. She said that many and many a time she had heard the old piano, though she had never seen anyone or anything. My father hooted at the idea; told mother she was a foolish and superstitious woman. Mother, however, persisted in her belief; she said she knew Aunt Edith's touch, as well as her fondness for certain composers. She always contended that poor Aunt Edith was unhappy.

"Then, again, we had an old family servant—a former slave—on whom Abraham Lincoln's famous proclamation had never made the slightest impression. She belonged to the Whitson family—and she had continued to "belong" until the day of her death. Old Mammy always declared that the piano was haunted; that it 'played itself'; that spirit hands used it, for she had heard it too many times, although she could not see anyone. Old Mammy, too, remained unshaken in her belief that invisible hands performed on the old piano."

Miss Rebecca declared that she, herself, had never heard the piano, nor had she ever noticed anything unusual about it, or the room. She had seen Sheba—the old collie dog—act strangely, at times. She would suddenly bristle, howl, and flee the room. No amount of coaxing, at such times, could get old Sheba back into the room.

Then suddenly, Miss Rebecca began to question me. Fixing her calm, steady eyes on me, she leaned forward and said, quietly, "What have you seen, child? Tell me —have you, too, heard the old piano? Have you heard Edith playing?"

Thus questioned, I proceeded to relate my experience with the old piano to Miss Rebecca. She did not seem surprised, but requested me to be discreet; that people reacted, differently, to such happenings; that she did not want to have her adopted family become nervous or suspicious. There was, after all, nothing to fear. I readily agreed to her request, realizing its wisdom.

A WEEK went by, and there dawned a Sabbath of July perfection. After a late breakfast, I strolled back to my room, but did not tarry there as the veranda was inviting me to come outside.

A brilliant, cloudless sky greeted me. In the distance and, to the left, Stone Mountain lifted its great, gray silhouette —that immense and God-made monolith on which is now being carved the Memorial to the Confederacy. A lonely, silent sentinel it stands, as if purposely, in the long ago, and secretly aware of its high destiny, it had wandered away from its kindred range—to become a lost mountain and most fittingly an enduring monument to "The Lost Cause," . . . a shrine where the North and South may meet—some day—and understand.

Then came the impulse—insistent, impelling, to go downstairs and into that old salon; the old rosewood piano was calling me—and I went.

Sitting down, I played a few chords, and then almost unconsciously my fingers strayed into the opening notes of that old Scotch ballad, *We'd Better Bide a Wee.* I played the first few measures, and had begun to hum the old song when lo! invisible hands again seized mine!— seized them and flung them from the keyboard! For a moment I was paralyzed with terror, then indignation came to my aid, that I should be thus treated—and for no reason, whatsoever, as far as I could see—unless, perhaps, because I had dared to use the beloved piano. Determinedly, I again placed my hands on the keys, hands that would tremble in spite of my resolve, and essayed the same ballad. Again, my hands were swept quickly aside —and none too gently.

I now realized that some strong psychic influence was at work; evidently, I was not to be allowed to use the instrument, or, perhaps—as the idea came to me—I was not to play that old song. Possibly, it evoked poignant memories for the unseen spirit that had thus assailed me—and from a rank outsider (such as I) was not to be tolerated. I would make one more attempt—try something else in the way of a musical selection.

With shaking hands and a quaking heart I began a favorite old hymn, *O Love That Will Not Bid Me Go.* I was permitted to play without interruption. Encouraged, forgetting to be afraid, I wandered off into a lovely old waltz, *Coppelia,* followed by *Almond Blossoms.* No interference still! What a temperamental ghost I had contacted! Then once more I stumbled into forbidden music . . . *Lohengrin's Wedding March* brought swift action—my hands were violently flung from the keyboard.

I hurriedly left the piano and hastened from the room. I had had enough, for that day, anyway, of that old rosewood piano and its invisible guardian.

With a calmer state of mind, came the decision to "listen in" on that old rosewood mystery, and unravel it—if I could.

MY next encounter with the *presence* came on a still and beautiful moonlight night. I was out on my veranda, and it must have been near midnight. The moon had brewed white magic, and the pagan half of me was responsive, reveling.

Then gently floating on the night air came the sound of the old piano—evidently the guardian of the piano liked moonlight, also.

Going to my room, I snatched up a flashlight and slipped quietly down the stairs, through the hall and into the old salon.

This time, as I advanced towards the piano, a shadowy form—that of a woman —arose from the piano and gliding swiftly to one of the long windows, disappeared through it.

I walked over to the old piano, flashing my light over it, carefully. It stood wide open, as also the window through which the apparition had gone.

Crossing to the window, I peered out on the veranda. The moonlight was very bright; things quite distinct, but there was no trace of the ghost lady.

Closing the window, I returned to the piano and carefully lowered its old square cover. Turning to leave the room, I heard, clearly, the sound of rushing water. It followed me as I fled upstairs.

SUMMER waned. One warm August night, retiring to my room right after dinner, I slipped into a kimono and went out on the veranda. After an unusually sultry day, the cool, dark evening was soothing, and soon becoming drowsy I decided to seek my bed. Almost at once I must have slipped over into that strange gray land of sleep. And thus I dreamed:

That the door of my room opened to admit a slender young woman, dressed in misty white robes—bridal robes. Somehow, I got the impression that they were wet, and very distinctly I heard the swish and murmur of running water. She was quite pretty, in a pale, ethereal fashion, with luminous, questioning eyes. She calmly walked over to a large rocker and sat down.

She stretched out her arms to me, beseechingly, and then I noticed her hands; long, slender fingers, supple and strong; the hands of a musician. She began to talk, rapidly but quietly; it sounded as though she might be whispering, yet I understood every word:

"I have wanted to come and see you for a long time—ever since you came to live with us," she announced. "If you will only listen to me—understand me—pity me —help me. I have come to feel that you will not be afraid of me, even though I am what the world calls dead. That is such an absurd idea. If people would only realize how thin the dark curtain is which is lifted for us on the other side. They suffer from earth-blindness, and we strive, vainly, to make them see. You, however, have learned to use the eyes of the Spirit, and your ears are attuned to the invisible world about you. I have waited long for help. O, the weary, cruel years!

"I would tell you the secret of my old rosewood piano. You like my old instrument, too. Hidden in it is my diary, my wedding ring, and some wonderful pearls. but only tears and misfortune did they bring to me.

"Listen, carefully, and after I have told you all, you must find my diary, concealed in a secret compartment of the old piano, and complete it for me. I wish my wedding ring destroyed. The diary and the pearls are to be given to my niece—Rebecca Whitson. Rebecca is a dear, good woman, and I love her dearly, but I have called in vain to her—she cannot hear, so you must help us both. Help me to finish my poor little life-story—that I may go to find my beloved—and peace.

"I WAS a very happy girl; I grew up in this old house, and of all my possessions I loved best my old rosewood piano. I told my secrets to it; entrusted my diary to its keeping; played some of my soul into it; my tears and laughter have fallen on its shining keys; it has been my only solace down the dreary years.

"Just prior to the Civil War, while I was visiting in Philadelphia, I met the one great lover. His name was Edmund Stewart; he was a captain in the United States Army. We loved at sight, and those few short weeks with him were the happiest of my life. The war clouds

gathered, and soon I was to return to the South. Fearing parental opposition, he persuaded me to marry him, secretly. I came home, and he returned to his post.

"Then came the long horror of the war. With nobody to confide in, I began to pour my heart out on the silent white pages of my diary. After a while his letters ceased to come. Did it mean my Edmund was dead? I was frantic, yet with no means of ascertaining news of him. The war ended—at last! The long, crucifying months came and went—still no word from my beloved. My family had long wanted me to marry another suitor, a persistent and devoted one, and at last, half-mad, and feeling that my darling had gone, I consented.

"My wedding night came—the ceremony, the reception, the guests, were like some dreadful dream. I went to my room, presently, to change my wedding gown. Wanting to be alone, I begged my friends to leave me for a little while. Sitting down, I took off my veil, and looked up to see Edmund beside me.

"Bitterly, he reproached me for my unfaithfulness. Yes, he was what the world termed dead, but what of it? He still loved me—still claimed me. He had been drowned during the last year of the war—in the line of duty. He still claimed me, however, and urged me to go with him. Had I forgotten our vows, our love? I followed him down the backstairs, out into the garden, and soon the open road was before us.

"He hastened on and on, and when I would hesitate, he would stop and beckon. After a long time, I heard the sound of water . . . we had come to the Chattahoochee River. Shudderingly, I drew back—not that, not that!—but he held out his arms to me, calling 'Come, my beloved wife, into a happier world. See, I will hold your hand and we will go together; hear the river singing; it's our requiem.' I went. The river was cold and swift and deep. Even as it claimed my body, my spirit was rising, freed of its earthly shard.

"Ah, but the dark angel separated us. One must await the summons, not hurry over into that spirit land, and so I . . . I have had to expiate the sin of what is called suicide. I have had to wander . . . wander . . . belonging neither to this world nor the one beyond. I have roamed around the old house, played on my beloved piano, and walked down where the Chattahoochee still sings. Soon, now, I may go to find my lover, but before I go, I want my diary completed and placed, together with the pearls, in the hands of Rebecca Whitson.

"I WILL tell you how to find the secret panel in the old piano. Under the body, just where the pedal-rack is attached, in front and slightly to the left, you will find a small protuberance—like a small button. Press it hard three times, and a narrow panel will slide back. You will find inside the diary, the ring, and the pearls.

"Take the diary and complete it; it left off the day I went away.

"You had better write the things I have told you in that little ruled book you keep on your table; you make such funny little scratches. Print it on that funny little black box (she pointed to my typewriter) which clicks when you tap the round, shining letters."

She got up, picked up a pencil and notebook lying on a small table, and handed them to me.

Sitting up in bed, obediently I began writing, in shorthand, the main points of the story as she had narrated them. She watched me, gravely, never once interrupting.

Finally, I lifted my pencil, looked at her and said:

"It is finished; I shall transcribe it tomorrow. I will search for the hidden spring and panel, in the old piano, find the diary and complete it, as you desire. Then I shall turn ring, pearls and book over to Miss Rebecca.

"I am happy to be able to serve you, both. May supreme love lead you, little spirit lady, to that waiting lover—and peace."

She smiled—such a beautiful and understanding smile, clapped her hands, softly, as a pleased child might do, turned and went out of the room.

I AWOKE with a sensation of expectancy, as if something had happened, or was about to happen. Instantly, too, my dream began taking form in my conscious mind. "How curious," I thought; "a very strange and vivid dream. Think of taking dictation from a ghost—rather an experience."

It was then quite early in the morning, and I attempted to go back to sleep. Sleep, however, refused to come. I finally arose, bathed and dressed myself, and went out on my small veranda to enjoy the freshness of the new day. Still, my dream persistently remained with me—intruding, claiming the center of attention.

Stepping back into my room, by chance—or was it chance?—my eyes fell on the small table and the shorthand notebook thereon.

Idly picking up the notebook, I opened it. I stared with unbelieving eyes at the context. I began reading, stopped, shut my eyes; for there in shorthand was my dream set forth, just as dictated by my dream-visitor. I had written those shorthand notes. There was no mistake about it, for shorthand, like longhand, soon becomes characteristically "individual," and this shorthand was my own. What could it mean?

Puzzled, worried, I sat down and went over the dictation, word for word. Quickly, I arrived at a decision. It was still early, long before my usual rising hour, or the rising hour of other members of the household.

I descended to the old salon, went up to the old piano, crawled under it and began searching for the secret spring. After some few minutes I found it. Upon pressure, a small, narrow panel slid back, and slipping my hand into the aperture, I found the diary (a small book), the pearls and the ring. The pearls and ring were wrapped in an old silk handkerchief—the wedding ring, itself, being attached to a thin, gold chain.

Carefully closing the panel, I returned to my room.

I examined, closely, the old diary. It was a written account of her story, up to her wedding day, just as narrated by the dream-ghost lady.

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One pitiful souvenir lay between its leaves—a short, curling lock of brown hair, which had evidently been cut from a man's head—his! Poor, parted, thwarted lovers! I found myself weeping; I would not fail her, I resolved.

Very carefully, I wrote out the completion of that swift, brief tragedy, typing it, as she had requested, then pasted it in the diary.

This task finished, I gathered up diary, notebook, ring and pearls and sought Miss Rebecca. I was anxious to tell her all.

Fortunately, she was up by that time, and I poured out my dream and its astonishing sequel.

She listened in amazement. The diary, pearls and notebook—the secret panel in the old piano—were compelling evidence.

"Poor, dear Edith," she kept murmuring, "how she must have suffered, and to think the pearls have been found—have been right here in the house all of these years. It is all so very strange, so marvelous! And you, dear child, how can I thank you? What can I do to show my gratitude, in some small measure?"

"By always keeping the old rosewood piano," I begged, "for it is the outward and tangible evidence of a spirit drama that has been played."

"The old piano has sanctuary, in the old house, as long as I live," she promised, adding, gently, "and I feel that Edith, too, has at last found the one great sanctuary."

The Man Who Lived Backward

(*Continued from page 20*)

keep for him so Tangore can't get hold of it! You'll regret it if you refuse to come when I ask you to, and he gets killed!"

She rushed out the door and slammed it as she went.

HER last words put a different light on the case. Not waiting to put on my hat, I started after her. As I hurried down the front steps, I heard what seemed like a shout coming from Tangore's house. Perhaps after all the woman was right. And I confess I was curious to see the effect of Tangore's theory when put to the test.

It didn't take me long to find out where Davey was when I entered the place, for I could now plainly hear him shouting in a back room. "Is that so? Well, I'll pay you five hundred and no more!" he was saying. "Yes, I'll pay you board, too, but this is a rotten place to board at, I can tell you!"

Miss Meldrum had walked in ahead of me.

"Hello, Doctor," said Tangore, catching sight of me through the half-open door of that inner room. "Did the woman go over after you?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, I'm glad you've come. What do you think of Davey now?"

In spite of the pleasant words, Tangore was displeased. His manner showed it. But the thought made little impression on me right then, for the reason that I was so interested in what had been David Bishop. He was walking excitedly back and forth across the room, casting suspicious glances at me.

I knew it was he, because Miss Meldrum had said David Bishop was there with Tangore; also Tangore called him Davey. But I had to take their word for it. This man before me was not a day over forty.

Tangore saw my astonishment. "This is Davey. Shake hands with him. Doctor," he said.

The man stopped and faced me. "You met Doctor Smith with me about a month ago, Davey. Don't you remember?"

"You're crazy," said Davey, giving me a staring look. "I never saw him before."

"True enough, Doctor," put in Tangore hastily. "It's forty years since he saw you. I'll tell you how it is, Doctor—we're having a little trouble here. Sit down." He cast a look of hatred at Miss Meldrum as he said the words. He bitterly resented her action in calling me to the house. "Davey has forgotten you, Doctor."

Miss Meldrum spoke up. "That is true, but don't you believe what this man says. Doctor, listen to me. This man a few minutes ago threatened to kill Davey. He had a knife, and he told Davey he would kill him if he refused to hand over to him the money he has secured from his estate."

"What is this, Tangore, anyway?" I inquired heatedly.

The Hindu shrugged. "I do not give a rich man the benefit of a great discovery because I like the color of his eyes, or because I want him as a friend. The woman wants to pay me five hundred dollars for my services." Tangore's dark eyes blazed with scorn. "The woman also is a liar, Doctor. I regret to say that of a woman, but it is true. She told you I had a knife and was threatening to kill Mr. Bishop. That is ridiculous. Why should I be so childish as to use a knife to threaten a man in his condition?

"I tried to reason with him, to make him understand that my fee should be paid now, at least in substantial part, and he raised his hand against me. I reached up to grab his wrist to stop him, and the woman rushed out of the house, crying bloody murder."

I did not ask Tangore what his fee was. It was probably large. But that was his business, not mine.

He appeared thoughtful for a few moments then went on: "We get about what we give in this world, Doctor. I have a secret in my innermost mind that no one in this world knows but I. I have given freely of this treasure of knowledge to Mr. Bishop. I have done my utmost for him because he wanted youth. He told me that nothing in this world meant anything to him but youth, and that he would give all he had to possess it once again. I have kept my word. He has not kept his. But—the miracle is not yet complete, for the process of living backward is not stopped, and *I am the only one in the world who can stop it!*"

I was astounded. "And what inference may we draw from that?"

"In a little while you will know," said Tangore enigmatically.

I passed the point, and turned my attention to Davey. The transformation in him fascinated me.

"Davey," I said, "how do you feel?"

"Who are you?" asked Davey.

"He's Doctor Smith, a dear friend of mine," Tangore repeated quietly. "He has come to see you and talk with you, and he has only the kindest thought for you. I would like you two to be friends."

A peculiar look came into Davey's eyes. It was a look of appeal, yet half of doubt, and it touched my heart. It seemed as though in that instant I saw a human soul adrift on an uncharted sea.

"How do I feel? I feel well."

"Do you understand that you are in the peculiar condition of changing back from old age to youth?"

"Yes. And I long always, every moment of my life, for youth. And I know I am going back there."

"Does it seem to you that you have known Mr. Tangore for many years?" I asked.

"Mr. Tangore has explained to me that one day of my life now is the same as two years of your life. I understand that."

"And what is your idea in seeking youth so fervently? Is it some great inspiration?"

A LIGHT crept into Davey's eyes, or rather it was a sudden brightening up of the glow I had always seen there.

"Yes—love," he replied eagerly.

"Specifically, you mean—for some particular person?" I asked.

"Yes—for Alice. I loved her when she was five, and I was sixty-three, when I used to hold her on my knee. I know I had loved her in some other life, but I could never make anyone believe that I lost the love of my wife by telling her what I have just told you. I have loved Alice for twenty years."

"And has she returned your love?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Davey solemnly, "all of that time."

The girl made no sign. To me, Davey's words were the key to the whole proceedings.

"Well, why is it, Davey," I said, "that you will not pay Doctor Tangore his fee for bringing youth to you?"

"Mr. Tangore asks for one hundred thousand dollars, and nothing less. That is about the amount I have cashed from my estate, the remainder of my fortune. The rest of it I gave to my wife. What I have left is in cash, as I say, and it is in Alice's hands. She will not consent to part with it, though for my part, I would be the happiest man on this earth with Alice only, and without a penny to call my own."

It became clear to me that I had stumbled into a situation that was none of my business. There was no cause for me to interfere for humanitarian reasons, for no violence was being done that I could see. The situation simmered down to the age-old, normal desire of a woman to hold onto the money she had acquired —the age-old determination to have for herself the man she loved.

I made my excuses to them as soon as I could decently do so, and left. When I had returned to my own fireside and my book, it was with the feeling that a fiction story offered adequate diversion from the rawness of human affairs.

And yet—I had to admit that Tangore had accomplished the most astounding rejuvenation I ever had seen.

MORE than three weeks later, as I was leaving my home at about eight o'clock in the morning on an emergency case, I almost ran into a Western Union messenger boy who thrust a sealed envelope toward me.

"Doctor Smith?"

"Yes."

"Please sign." I signed the receipt and took the envelope in my hand, glancing at it hastily. I had no time to open and read it, and crammed it into my pocket as I climbed into my car and hurried off. It was not until hours later that I opened this envelope, strange as that may seem, for my mind had been so taken up with the critical case I had in hand that thought of all else was blotted out. The emergency safely over and my mind relieved, it was near noontime when I returned home.

I came back in the direction that brought me by Tangore's house. The blinds were closely drawn as they always were, and I slowed the car to a stop in front, and sat absorbed in speculation as to what weird happenings might be developing in those dark rooms back of those closely drawn blinds. Suddenly I remembered the envelope I had received some hours before. Could it be that there was some connection, that subconscious thought had impelled me to stop just there and remember that I had this message, still unopened?

I reached for the envelope and looked at it closely. Below my name and address a date was stamped in heavy lettering, and below this were the words: "To be delivered ten days after date stamped." The flap of the envelope was heavily cemented with red sealing wax. Whoever had sent it, I thought, must have wanted to make doubly sure it would not be opened before it reached me. I tore it open quickly and read as follows:

Doctor Smith: When you were at my house last I told you that the miracle was not yet complete, that the process was not stopped, and that I was the only person who could stop it. You asked me what inference you might draw from that, and I replied that in a little while you would know. Now the time has come. Go to the house where I lived, and there you will find the answer. With kind personal regards to you,

TANGORE.

P. S.—When you receive this I will be well on my way to India. If you are wise you will destroy this paper and will be unable to recall that you ever knew me.

A woman who interfers with the progress of science is certainly a damn fool!

With a heart-beat that was not altogether normal, I got to the curb, walked up the steps of Tangore's house, and rang the bell. There was no answer. I rang again, and still there was no answer. Then I shook the door several times—another wait, but no response.

I got in my car, drove it to the garage in the next block where I kept it, and returned home. At lunch I felt restless and could not center my mind on anything but the thought of Davey and the girl.

Hurrying through lunch, I again returned to Tangore's house and mounted the steps, determined this time to enter the place, even if I had to pry open a window.

TANGORE'S house is an exact counterpart of the house where I live, and it finally occurred to me after more futile ringing of the bell to try my key on the lock, which was an old-fashioned affair similar to the lock on my own door. I was gratified to find that it worked, and, entering the house, I closed the door back of me and started along the hall.

I had the feeling then that some strange condition existed in that house. Was it intuition or fear of the unknown that made me hesitate? Absolute silence was within. Outside, I could hear the rumble of passing cars, but that was all. What had happened the instant I had closed that door and the lock had snapped back into place? It was as if I were being warned by the unseen guard to keep back, to keep away from the spot and not take another step forward.

The door to the first room, the sitting room was closed. I opened it. Everything looked the same as when I had been there last—except that dust covered the furniture, as if the room had not been entered by anyone for days. As I glanced around the room my eyes caught sight of a woman's hair-pin lying on the carpet near the fireplace. I stooped and picked it up, speculating on how recently it may have been dropped there. It had belonged to Alice, no doubt.

I walked slowly on into the dining room. Here I found the same conditions —dust and musty, impure air. Off the dining room was the kitchen. I had never been in this room, and there was no particular reason why I should go there now, yet something seemed to impel my steps toward it.

THIS kitchen had the usual white-topped table and a gas range near it. But what attracted my attention was the evidence that someone had been handling food there, not more than an hour before. A small porcelain pan was on the stove, the bottom of the pan being covered with moist coffee dregs that retained the unmistakable aroma of very recent preparation. A loaf of rather stale bread was on the table, partly cut, with crumbs and a breadknife near it.

I had the feeling then that Davey was in the house. And, if I were correct in this conjecture, and he could not be found on the lower floor, the likelihood was that I'd find him in the bedroom Tangore had assigned to him when he first came there two months before—on the second floor at the rear, I recalled.

Slowly I walked up the steps, and quietly, without a sound. Along the upper hall I walked from the stair landing, the thick carpet rendering my slow progress soundless, the whole house remaining as silent as the grave.

I would give Davey a surprise. Deserted by everyone he might be, but I would lend him a helping hand.

The next moment I was looking through the doorway of his bedroom, the door of which was partly open, upon a sight that seemed to cause my hair to stand on end, and my heart almost to stop beating.

THE object that met my eye was seated in a chair, at right angles to me, and facing the large mirror of the bedroom dresser. It had on an old pair of trousers with a ragged bit of suspender running loosely across one shoulder. The entire body—feet, hands and face, were covered with black hair. *The face was unmistakably that of a gorilla!*

Yet, strangely enough, what filled me with horror was what it did. The tenants of that house before Tangore came there, may have had children, and apparently it had found a child's trunk of doll clothes and ribbons, for, grimacing in the mirror at itself, it had bedecked its neck and great, hairy head with bits of these brightly colored ribbons and children's trinkets, and was busy admiring itself—so busy at it that it did not notice me looking in through the doorway at it.

Thoughts were racing through my mind —strange, conflicting thoughts. Terror was uppermost.

Suddenly it turned toward me, and not seeming at all surprised at seeing me standing there, grimaced in my face.

"Alice," it said, in a queer-sounding, guttural voice, half-man, half-animal; "where's Alice?"

I kept my nerve, though how, I do not know. It was shock enough to see a gorilla that I more than suspected had been a man shortly before, but it was more of a shock to hear it speak the human tongue, and know that it had been a man—was still partly man.

I took Davey with me that same day when evening came, and under cover of darkness got him to my home. without a soul seeing him. I did what I could to stop Tangore's infernal work, but gave it up. I thought of killing the thing, but I revolted at the idea. That would be murder.

In time Davey took to my place, seemed to like his surroundings from the first; and he even took a pride in keeping his room in order, which I taught him to do. I lived alone at that time, which was four years ago, and no one ever entered my home except a cleaning woman who came daily to tidy up the place. I dispensed with her services the following morning, meeting her at the door and paying her a week in advance. She never got beyond the threshold.

That is the story of how Al, the most intelligent gorilla in captivity, came to live with me, and how he came to be Al—how, in fact, he came to be a gorilla.

Often as I pass the old brownstone house, two doors east, where the blinds

always remain down, I think of the strange event that occurred there.

No person, from that day to this, as far as I know, has passed the threshold of that house of mystery.

OUR meal was ended, and the Doctor started filling his pipe.

"And so you have managed to keep the whole thing a secret?" I said.

"Yes," he replied slowly, as he blew smoke rings toward the ceiling and watched them reminiscently, "no human eye has ever looked on Al but yours and my own and that of my Japanese boy, Togo."

"And you have had him here four years?" I asked.

"Four years. In the time he has been with me he has changed a great deal—become more of a gorilla and less a man. He no longer can talk. But his disposition has always remained the same—gentle and kindly without variance.

"I am quite sure he does not recall the past. He is happy, and he has a very deep and lasting devotion for me. I will keep him as long as he lives—unless he outlives me. He will always have a good home and kind treatment. You must remember, too, that Al is nearly ninety years of age, yet he is big and strong and full of energy and the joy of living."

"Apparently Alice deserted him at the last," I suggested, curious to know what the Doctor would have to say on this point.

"No doubt of that! Nobody ever heard of her," he said emphatically. "One of the most heartless women I ever met. And one of the most beautiful, as well," he added with a wry smile. "I almost fell for her myself. I have never blamed Davey for losing his head over her. But God—look what it brought him to!"

"Yes, I was just thinking about that myself," I commented.

. . . "And what about Tangore?"

"Probably Tangore fled as soon as he saw the gorilla signs appearing, believing—which actually did come to pass—the process would continue and revert Davey back to his original ancestral life. It is my honest conviction that his experiment got beyond hm. He couldn't control it."

Just then Al entered and looked about carefully, to make sure that there was nothing his master needed which he might give him.

"I have my pipe, Al," said the Doctor in a kindly voice, and with a quiet smile. "Thank you for thinking of me."

Al, satisfied, turned and shuffled back to the kitchen.

The Haunted Dagger

(*Continued from page* 51)

Fielding showed a desire to re-open the subject. His interest in the misericorde had now become tinctured with a species of awe. He examined it minutely, turning it over and over in his palm as though in that way, to absorb the secret of its grewsome past.

As he turned to me with a question on his lips, there was a knock at the living room door. I answered it.

"A telegram for you, sir," announced the bell-boy.

It was a wire from Ashworth, my publisher, apprising me of his intended arrival in New York that morning, en route from Florida, and asking that I dine and spend the evening with him at his suburban home.

"I'm sorry, George," I said regretfully. "You know I'd far rather go out with you this evening, but——"

"No apologies. Tomorrow's another day." He rose. "Come on out for a walk in the park. It'll clear the cobwebs from that alleged brain of yours."

I was making ready to leave for Ashworth's at five, when Fielding remarked, half-jestingly, "I'm curious to try out a little experiment tonight. I'm going to sleep with the misericorde in my hand." He laughed aloud at my sudden start. "I've always wanted to see or feel a spook—and there's no time like the present." He looked at me in his familiar, teasing way.

I had an impulse to dissuade him . . . and yet . . . I feared his ridicule. Perhaps the thing was a dream after all. Perhaps.

IT was eleven that night when I rose to leave Ashworth's. A light snow that had begun falling in the early evening, had now developed into a veritable blizzard. Street lights were barely visible. The neighboring houses were blotted out.

"You can't leave now." And Ashworth laid a detaining hand on my arm. "It's absurd. Why not put up here overnight? We've plenty of room."

His wife added her urgings to his own. I finally decided to remain. But I also decided to call Fielding on the phone and tell him of my intention.

"He hasn't come in yet," the desk clerk answered. "Is there any message?"

I left word and rang off.

Although the snow had ceased by morning, the fall was so heavy that traffic of all kinds was almost at a standstill. I did not reach New York until noon.

As I stepped into the elevator, it seemed to me an air of suppressed excitement hovered over the face of the young mulatto boy who ran it.

"You wasn't heah las' night, was you, suh?"

"I spent the night on Long Island. The blizzard held me up."

"Then—you ain't been up in your room yet?"

"Why? What makes you ask?"

"Well, suh, Mr. Fielding, he left special word last night for to be woke up at noon, and the operator she cain't git him to answer, ner no one don't answer the door——"

I did not wait to hear further. We had just come to my floor. In an instant I was down the hall and had turned into the little corridor leading to our rooms. The clerk and a house man had preceded me, and had at that moment unlocked the door of our suite.

With legs that could scarcely bear me up I stepped into the room ahead of them.

It was as I had feared. . .

On the bed, his body contorted in the last rigors of frightful agony, his eyes glassy with horror, lay Fielding. And from his clenched fingers, its lower half buried from sight above his heart, rose the hilt of the misericorde.

My state of mind may be imagined. Stunned by the manner of Fielding's death, as well as by the loss of my comrade, I was in a sort of daze.

No shadow of suspicion rested upon me. My alibi was complete. The coroner and his jury examined, in turn, the various employes of the place: the chambermaid, the desk clerks, the elevator boy and all those with whom we came in daily contact. One or two of the guests—casual acquaintances—were questioned.

The signs of a violent struggle, presumably after Fielding had composed himself to sleep, were too evident to admit the suicide theory. This being eliminated, a motive for the murder would have to be established.

Money, jewels and a valuable collection of antique weapons in a cabinet all lay untouched. The doors were locked from the inside, the keys in place. It would have been well-nigh impossible for the assailant to have scaled the walls of the building at that height, without attracting notice.

THE attempt to introduce jealousy as a motive, met with absolute failure. Fielding's freedom from any love entanglement, triangular or otherwise, despite his handsome person, his wealth and his debonair manner, was clearly established.

Within a day's time it had become a *cause celebre*. Newspapers devoted columns to it. It was discussed everywhere. Solutions of all kinds were offered. One writer even suggested the probability of the murderer's gaining access to the room by the aid of an aeroplane, making his entry and exit via the window. Another, with Poe's Rue Morgue mysteries in mind, offered as the possible perpetrator, an ape that, escaping from its captor, had climbed from ledge to ledge. The country was agog with the mystery; and through it all, I sat, dumb with misery; for, had I followed my first impulse when Fielding announced his fatal intention, I would have hidden that satanic weapon from sight forever.

All through the night I paced the floor, half-crazed with my secret burden. Should I keep silent and risk the misericorde's passing into other hands, or should I tell the ghastly properties of that blade? If I did the latter, would I not implicate myself in some way with poor Fielding's death?

The case had been turned over to Garth, a detective of international reputation.

We were seated in Garth's library one evening, the two of us going over the thing for the hundredth time, it seemed to me, when my eye fell upon the title

of a book on the table between us, *Manifestations of The Spirit World*, by an English scientist.

"Look here, Garth," I said, changing the subject abruptly, "You don't take any stock in this sort of thing, do you?" And I pointed to the volume.

An expression that was partly embarrassment came over his face. "Well," he defended, "the fact is, I never discount any theory until I've disproved it. To be frank, I still have an open mind on the subject of spiritualism."

I managed to conceal my astonishment at the admission of this shrewd, practical-minded man.

"YOU see," he continued, "one can't quite scoff at a thing that has engaged the attention of such men as James and Lodge. If they refuse to discredit spiritistic phenomena, there's something more to it than mere trickery."

I looked at Garth long and earnestly. A sudden hope leaped up within me.

"I wonder then," I said, "how far you'll credit the thing I'm going to tell you."

Garth's heavy brows lifted inquiringly.

"It's an experience of mine that is known to no other living creature." And I plunged resolutely into my story.

My tale was ended. A vast sense of relief surged through me. I no longer carried that burden in secret.

Garth's eyes had narrowed to two small slits as he sat, quite motionless, regarding me during the progress of my story. But as I went along with the recital, my utter honesty impressed him, and his face became a study in perplexity and credulity.

"I'm not prepared to say that you dreamed this thing, though it's possible. I neither deny or affirm. Psychologists might explain it on the basis of self-hypnosis—suicide impulse, or that sort of thing. As for me, I must have a go at the blade myself. I'd like to try it out," he added zestfully. He pulled out his watch. It was now ten-thirty. "I say," cried Garth suddenly, "what do you think of going down to Police Headquarters and testing it out this evening?"

I shook my head. "They'd think it was lunacy."

"You're wrong," said Garth. "The chief's been a sort of dabbler in spiritualism himself, ever since his oldest boy was killed in the war. It would surprise you if you knew how many folks are interested in the subject, though they won't admit it in the open."

The Chief of Police, a portly-looking man, received us cordially in his office.

In a short time Garth had briefly and dramatically told him the story as I had given it to him. The impassivity of the chief's countenance during this recital, cloaked his mental reactions. He had a good poker face. His glance passed back and forth from Garth to myself. I wondered if the recital was a sort of play between the two men, in order to humor me and give them a further clue.

"Let's have a look at the thing again, Chief," said Garth, eager to try the experiment.

The chief turned, and opened a drawer at his elbow.

"Here you are," and he handed the misericorde over to the detective.

Garth picked it up in an almost gingerly manner, and considered the thing for a moment.

"I'm not what is called a 'sensitive'," he said. "The experiment may not work out with me at all."

"Why not have the chief try it then?" I offered.

That impassive mask dropped for the merest instant, as the chief flashed a nervous look at Garth. The next moment he was holding out his hand. "Pass it over, Garth." The detective complied.

"It might be well to have a fourth man in," I suggested.

The chief nodded and pressed a button on his desk.

A tall, powerfully built young chap in the early twenties appeared.

"My son Buddy," said the chief, by way of introduction. "Buddy" blushed and looked uncomfortable.

"Sit down, Bud, and keep your eyes open, that's all—unless things begin to get a bit exciting in here. I'll explain later."

Buddy obeyed orders.

"It might be well to turn out a few of these lights," and the chief touched a wall switch, leaving only his desk lamp lighted.

THE room was now in semi-darkness, save where the ring of lamp-light enclosed his corpulent body. He leaned forward, picked up the misericorde from the desk where he had momentarily placed it, then sat back in his chair again.

Silence . . . Presently the whirr of a motor from the street below.

A telephone bell pealed in one of the outer rooms. . . Silence again. And now the only sound was that of our labored, rhythmic breathing. Minutes were passing. . .

The chief threw a restive glance at us. He was beginning to chafe under this tiresome business.

I was about to speak to him, when suddenly there was a peculiar spasm of his features and his face turned a pasty white.

What was happening to the light?

It had grown dim and blurred so that the chief's face was seen as through a reddish mist. . .

There was a quick, sharp intake of breath from the three watchers, for, his eyes widening with abject terror, his gaze fastened upon his hand, the chief attempted to rise from his chair. The pudgy fingers that clasped the hilt of the misericorde had gripped themselves about it, until the knuckles showed white and gristly . . . as he pulled backward in horror from his own hand, we saw the point of the misericorde give a sudden, upward twist.

There was a blood-curdling yell. "It's got me! It's got me! Save me, for God's sake!"

With one bound we were at him. "Bear down on the dagger!" I cried as, with all our might we tried to wrest the weapon from the hand so tightly wrapped about it.

The chief now lying like a stunned porpoise in his chair could give no assistance. Back and forth we twisted, wrestling, panting, with short inarticu-

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late cries, almost wrenching his hand away with the dagger as we brought our strength to bear on that unseen menace.

A final herculean pull. Clang! That sinister, horrible weapon fell to the floor. . .

DAYS later, when the unsolved mystery of Fielding's death had passed from the public's attention, a tug glided out of the harbor at dusk. Aboard it were Garth, the chief, and myself. When we reached a spot where there were no spying eyes to witness, a heavily weighted box was lifted to the rail of the vessel and heaved overboard into the all-encompassing secrecy of the sea.

It should not be difficult to guess what was in that box.

As to the ghastly properties of this "haunted dagger," as those of us who had felt the effect of its power, had come to call it, I can only say that I am certain in my own soul that it possessed some mysterious, unseen power, which could be nothing else than a supernatural agent. Remember, I am only giving this as my opinion. But I have good cause to know, and when I think of my good friend Fielding, lying in cold death, I let others shake their heads in doubt, but I *know*.

The explanation? There is none. The vicious, steel point of this misericorde had pushed its way between the armor-joints of many a brave knight, in a ghastly, cruel butchery. Perhaps human revenge and hate had become incorporated in it, an inanimate thing. So far, human science has found no way of explaining these things.

My Seance with Margery, the Medium

(*Continued from page 29*)

again. "I am a spirit of low intelligence," he said.

It appears that on a previous occasion a clergyman had been present and had asked Walter whether he had seen God. Walter had replied with some tartness that he was no nearer the Deity than the Minister, "and that was a long way off." This had nettled the clergyman, who remarked that the spirit was evidently "of low intelligence." Apparently the slur had rankled in Walter's mind, and he delighted in poking fun at himself.

WE were in the midst of these experiments when Walter suddenly said: "Why don't you answer the telephone?" Now we were at the top of the house, with the door closed. None of us had heard the bell. Even when someone opened the door, it was difficult to hear what Walter's keen spirit-sense apparently had registered. True enough the telephone was ringing. Six people with normal hearing could not detect the sound, but Walter was instantly aware of it.

A later demonstration was made with the box containing a bell. Walter was requested to ring it by exerting spirit force on the lid which made the electric connection. This was the contrivance that baffled Houdini. A perceptible draught was instantly set in motion, caused I presume by the effort of bringing ectoplasmic force into play. Then the bell rang.

I was given the box to hold. It weighed some eight pounds. I carried it all around the room while the little bell rang without intermission. Walter continued his remarks, some of them of the most flippant kind. On more than one occasion I placed my hand on Margery's throat to make sure that she was not speaking. No tremor or movement either in her throat nor in her diaphragm was discoverable. The voice of Walter was gruff, but his speech clear. It was as though someone were speaking with difficulty by reason of a bad attack of laryngitis. I can imitate the sound quite closely when I have a bad cold.

In answer to questions about his state, Walter explained that he was occupied much as we are on earth. His status had changed but little, with the important exception that he had gained a comprehension of the fourth dimension. When projecting himself or his intelligence, or his spirit—call it what you will—into the physical world, he said he was able to comprehend height, width, depth, as can we; but in addition he commanded the mystery of what the late W. T. Stead called "throughth." That is, he could see through solid objects and visualize what lay beyond.

He gave a sample of this added power. He turned to one of the visitors who had asked him a few questions, and warned him that he was in a bad physical condition.

"Cut out the fodder," he said in his gruff way. "Let up on the fodder. You are eating too much."

"Is this a warning?" asked the visitor.

"No," said Walter. "Don't be alarmed. You are not going to die in January, but let up on the food stuffs."

Now it was known only to me that the gentleman in question had been warned by his doctor to be careful on account of his health, and that if he were not more moderate in his eating and drinking, he might not last more than a few months. In fact, January had been named as the danger point.

I then addressed Walter. "What about me?" I said.

Walter chuckled. "You? Why, you are hard as nails. You will live to be a hundred and seventy. But your friend has a bad liver. He is all wrong inside."

"Can you see his liver?" was asked.

"Sure thing," he repeated. "If he don't slow down on his grub, he won't live long."

A FEW minutes later Walter remarked: "Well, I must be getting away."

Nobody opposed this. Everyone said "Good-night" politely, and the sitting came to an end.

It was explained to me that it is a "great psychic effort for a departed spirit to project himself into this sphere," even when aided by a good medium. Walter appeared to get suddenly tired.

Now, I am not going to offer explanations of these simple and perhaps somewhat futile manifestations. Nor can I answer the complaint of a great many people, that no useful result is obtained at such séances as I witnessed. I have, however, good reason to believe that occasionally valuable advice is given through the message of the departed speaking with the aid of a medium.

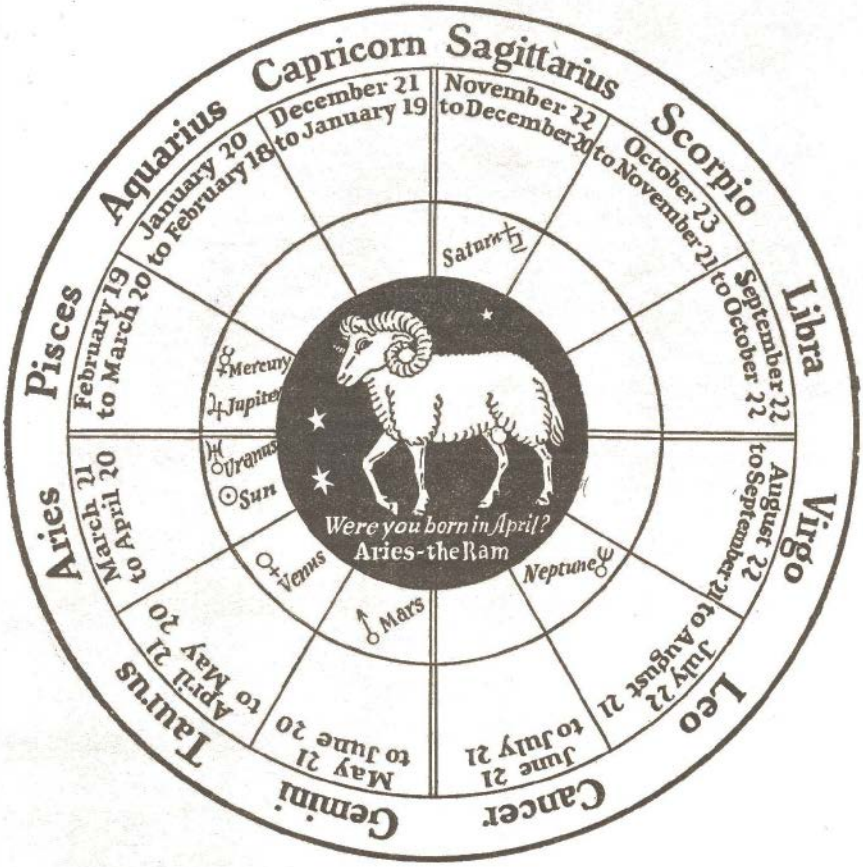
THE GHOST FORUM

—J. A. V'S pithy and pointed chats about books—will be held over until June GHOST STORIES. Lack of space prevents running it in this issue. Watch for it! The Forum is unequalled anywhere.

Were You Born in April?

Let the Stars Indicate Your Fate

By "Stella"



THE CHART TO GUIDE YOU TO SUCCESS

WAS it April when you first came to your mother's arms, or were the blustering winds still voicing a noisy welcome to Spring? Either is possible if you are a child of enthusiastic, headstrong Aries—the Ram—for the Sun enters this sign on March 21st, the first day of Spring, and does not leave it until April 20th.

I wonder if you have ever thought what you would do if you were free to choose? Would you be a warrior, a pioneer, or an adventurer? Impetuous, hot-headed Mars is the ruler of your destiny; and doesn't the mere thought of action, or the challenge to a fight, stir your blood and fire you with enthusiasm?

Throughout the ages, the popular heroes and greatest orators have been born under the rule of Mars and Aries. Coming within this sign, you are meant to be a leader in the great adventures of life. Vital energy, enthusiasm, courage and the spirit of fair play—these are the weapons given you with which to conquer the world.

The season of the year, the Spring, the flood tide of which is included in this period, typifies your own spirit, when born under this influence, and it remains with you throughout life, always seeking to remain uppermost, but not always succeeding. Much depends upon yourself, for it must be remembered that the influence of the stars, as related to the date of your birth, is not definite in the sense of marking out your fate. It is from within yourself that decision and definite action must come.

Uranus—the most disturbing of all the planets—has just entered your sign and during the next 7 years will greatly influence your fate. He is a slow-moving star and has not visited Aries since 1850. His influence is always disturbing and, while he is interested in you, you may expect sudden changes and strange experiences — perhaps a fortune, perhaps sharp misfortune. It is impossible to tell.

The things you expect probably won't materialize, and things you don't expect will come to pass; with Uranus' influence ascendant, one never knows. At the moment, he is concentrating upon those of you whose birthday comes about March 22nd, and if you were

born in April you may not feel this strange vibration until 1929 or even 1930.

Arians born in April are now under the protection of Jupiter and, like the Piscurians born during the second week of March, are promised a period of good fortune and prosperity. Venus also is favoring you, though just now her chief energies are directed towards the happiness of her own children—the Taureans.

THE love affairs and monetary concerns of those born in May should now be successful and the next few months should be very happy ones for them. If, however, your birthday happens to be about May 15th, you are not quite so lucky because Neptune just now is unfriendly to you and may bring you anxiety and disappointment.

Such is the probable fate also of those born about February 14th or November 15th, because they too are out of favor with Neptune who sometimes mixes up things terribly for us. He is very interested in our emotions and often leads us into deep waters.

Whatever experience Neptune brings is memorable. If you fall in love under his influence you will probably get hurt rather badly. If you put through a business deal under his direction, it will be big business for you and result in considerable profit. Again, if you suffer reversal, it will not be trivial. Neptune is not so bombastic as Mars, but he exaggerates. To those born about April 15th or December 17th, the Neptunian vibration promises some very happy experiences.

The Geminians and Sagittarians are perhaps the least fortunate just now, because they are at the mercy of Mars and Saturn—extremes of heat and cold. Saturn, however, is really only concerned with those born about the 29th of November or May, while Mars is more interested if your birthday comes between the 6th and 21st of June or December.

Mars moves so quickly that his influence soon passes, but if your birthdays comes within the periods mentioned you should be careful to avoid possible danger through fire or accident and loss through theft.

All those born about the 28th or 29th of February, May, August or November are now feeling the restrictions of Saturn and may find themselves frequently led into conflict through argument about controversial matters such as religion, prohibition, and national policy. Also they may suffer from sleeplessness and a feeling of general depression. They should do everything possible to build up their vital forces.

WHILE under this Saturnian influence the best thing for them to do is to take plenty of sleep, fresh air and exercise until the disciplinarian amongst the stars takes them again into his favor. Tense each part of the body, relax, tense again and relax; this is the best possible way of getting rid of that tired feeling. Tense every muscle in the body and then relax just before you go to sleep, and do the same thing when you wake in the morning; you will be surprised to find how much this will help you.

I do not want my readers to feel that they are the playthings of a blind and relentless destiny. The stars show us what we have to go through but they help us to overcome our difficulties. We have to meet certain conditions but the manner in which we meet them is left entirely to us and this is why one's point of view is so important.

When the Dumb Speak

(*Continued from page* 42)

lips as any man should die, but with a horrible curse. I am sure the devil must have been waiting for his soul, and now as the whistles of the river craft sent their mournful notes to my ears, I could think only of that man, and how his soul must be broken with remorse for all the evil deeds he had done in this life, and particularly for the death of the little dog.

THE hours dragged on as I sat there. The house had become quiet and there was only an occasional passerby on the street outside. My room was on the third floor and only the blond girl was above me. Because of a dearth of patrons the other rooms on my floor were vacant. For reasons which were her own affair, and for which, because of the tragedy that lay in her eyes, I know the good Lord will some time forgive her, the girl had not returned as I sat there, nor did I expect to hear her until the hours when the sun would dispel the vicious night with its ungodly doings.

Thus I was alone. A clock somewhere in the house wearily noted the passing hours—11, 11:30, 12. A sudden gust of wind rising outside, shrieked eerily. An old-fashioned wooden shutter, with which style of window blind the house was equipped, banged noisily, and I wondered if a roomer somewhere had been so incautious as to provide air for himself while he slept, contrary to the general custom—despite the mustiness of the place.

The breath of air continued into my room and all but extinguished the inefficient gas flame, and set the shadows jumping at me and retreating under the bed and into the corner near the dresser. I raged at the light and determined on the morrow to quit this place of fantastic images and gas lights and sudden, unexpected drafts, and go to a place where one would not feel that the specters of departed things were reaching over the back of his chair to grasp him with their outstretched fingers.

I longed for sleep that would not come. Disgusted with myself and my thoughts, I flung aside my book and strode up and down the room a few times. I berated myself for constantly thinking of the beast of a man who had killed the dog and told myself I was a fool for ever wasting any sentiment on the affair at all.

In the midst of my stride I stopped to listen. There was, somewhere in the house, the dull thump, thump, of someone climbing the stairs. It seemed to come from two floors below. It was a measured step, muffled and heavy. I was surprised, for I had not heard the outer door open or close, as I should have done if one of the roomers were returning. I was startled, worried, afraid of something—I knew not what. The atmosphere was surcharged with the premonition of some awful event.

I started to walk again, angrily telling myself that the little blond upstairs was unusually early. But try as I would I could not throw off the vague uneasiness that assailed me, and finally I was compelled again, for no apparent reason, to stop and listen.

NOW the person, or thing, or whatever it was, had nearly reached the top of the stairs at the second floor. Its muffled tread was a trifle louder. The measured monotony of the step continued. The hair on my head began to rise and perspiration oozed out of my forehead. That measured beating was coming closer—coming for *me*. And I could not get away. It was creeping nearer and nearer. I felt I should cry out but my throat was going dry. Still with monotonous regularity the footsteps approached. I became paralyzed with fear.

Nerves, I told myself. I tried to turn my thoughts elsewhere. But again I listened.

Now the footsteps had reached the landing. Now I could hear the body dragging itself around the bannister to begin the climb at the top of which was my room. It brushed and scraped against the wall below me. I could think only of someone bearing a heavy burden, like that of a dead body up the stairs.

Now a foot had been put on the first step. Now it was there—not fifteen feet from me—ascending the staircase with that dreadful tread—thud—thud—thud, with an interval between that seemed like eternity.

I fought with the frenzy of my soul. My gas light flickered and seemed about to desert me. I could not stir from my position in the center of the floor. The room seemed stifling.

"What is it?" I called in the desperation of fear. But there was no answer—only that ominous, measured, creeping tread.

Now it had reached the top of the stairs and was turning the corner towards my room. It was just outside. Fascinated, I waited for the knob on my door to turn. But it did not. Whoever or whatever waited there, made no offer to enter.

I heard it breathing—a throaty, gasping, wheezing whistle. How it reminded me of

that gasping farmer and of the malicious hate in his eyes!

But now as I waited, my nerves suddenly relaxed their tension. I smiled to myself. Thoughts returned to my numbed brain. I called out, as I remembered.

"Come in, Mrs. Purdy. You want the evening paper."

The landlady, of course.

There was no response. Only that wheezing, throaty breathing. Merciful God, wouldn't it stop!

Unknown dread, terrible fear, froze the very marrow of my bones. That damnable gas flickered and again seemed about to go out. And all the while there sounded from just the other side of that thin barrier of wood the whistling, asthmatic breathing of who or what was waiting there.

In desperation I gathered myself together and with chills at my spine and goose flesh standing out all over me, I grasped the knob and threw open the door.

The hall was empty!

I staggered back, thunderstruck. Another gas jet burned dimly at the head of the stairway, casting vague shadows in the corners.

No person or thing was there. Yet even as I had grasped that knob something surely had stood before my door.

Suddenly I became aware of a damp chill enveloping me, as though I had passed into the fog of a winter night. A musty odor as from some long-sealed charnel house assailed my nostrils. And behind me, almost over my shoulder, there was a laugh—a throaty, wheezing chuckle.

I whirled to meet the laugh. Nothing was behind me. Was I mad? I asked myself. My fingers opened and closed convulsively on my breast. Fear that was primordial gripped me. Then again, from behind me as I stood, and from the far end of that short corridor, there came a second chuckle. Again I whirled and again found nothing.

My physical body could stand it no longer. My knees weakened. I tottered and fell fainting.

HOW long I lay there I do not know. I came to my senses with the feeling that someone was watching me—someone, or something, in a dark corner near the dresser. I drew one hand across my face to clear my vision, and became aware of two piercing black eyes, unblinking, unvarying, staring at me. They were malignant eyes. Evil and hate burned in them. Now they were red; now they changed to that ominous black again—cold, hard eyes, like the cold that blows between the worlds.

A white, filmy form went with them that seemed to change in density with amazing swiftness, apparently with the spirit's mood. There was nothing tangible about it one instant, and I could see the wall through it, then it would suddenly gather density and glow with a dull light, and I felt somehow that it was capable of a deadly, physical contact.

Slowly I dragged myself to my knees. The contorted, twisted face came nearer. The eyes danced with fiendish, heliish glee that could come only from the slime and the foulness of the deepest pit. Again there sounded that horrible chuckle.

Then, as I looked more closely, I was horrified beyond description as I recognized before me the farmer whom I had throttled for hurting the dog!

But he was dead! Why had his wraith come to plague me? Why had his spirit sought me out, far away from his own dooryard, in the midst of a great city that in life he never had visited?

And then I knew. Hate, that blind, unreasoning, bestial hate that sprang from his ungoverned temper, lived after death. He had sworn to get even with me for the humiliation I had caused him before his own pride. He never had forgotten or forgiven my action in coming between him and the dog. He had carried that hate beyond the grave and now he had come to wreak vengeance upon me. I knew now I would find no mercy at his hands. My life was in the balance.

He still appeared to be the giant I had known him, and his arms hung from his great shoulders like a gorilla's. Fang-like teeth gleamed yellowish white as he stepped forward, toward me, with the slouching gait of an ape-man and his breath came whistling from his throat.

He spoke no word. He made no other movement, except that slow, sidewise, crab-like creeping toward me. His feet scraped across the threadbare carpet, but there was no other sound. The very menace of that slow advance filled me with such terror that I would have cried aloud but my vocal cords seemed atrophied. I was on my knees, helpless, unable to defend or guard myself against that thing creeping towards me.

Again that charnel house affluvia filled my nostrils. He was close now. I felt his cold presence. His hands stole forward—taloned hands, with claw-like fingers. They encompassed my throat. They were cold and damp, and sent a shuddering chill through me.

I STRUCK out blindly but my hand passed quite through the form before me as it would pass through vapor. I could not fight against a shadow. The deadly fingers pressed tighter and tighter about my throat—powerful, constrictive. My mouth opened, my eyes bulged, my arms waved frantically. My breath was shut off, and the struggle I made served but to set my ears ringing with the pressure of the blood in my head.

When it seemed as though my head would burst with the strain, the ghost threw me aside and stepped back. Again there came that horrid chuckle. The face, through the haze that was before my eyes, leered at me grotesquely, smiling that awful, malignant smile, with yellow teeth bared and crooked face contorted like a person in a convulsion.

Once more that taloned hand stole towards me and once more I felt the cold fingers about my throat. Again I struggled, but the flail-like blows of my fists cut through the wraith without impression. It was as senseless as fighting the chill fog that rises of an evening over some dank marsh.

This time the fingers retained their hold. The grip grew tighter and fiercer and the hateful world that I was in grew black before my eyes. I tried to scream aloud, to pray to God in heaven, to call someone to my rescue, but my voice was only a gurgle. I clasped my arms about the legs of the wraith—and found that the effort only crossed them upon my own breast. A thousand bells rang in my ears. Lights danced before my eyes. In a moment death would come, and in the morning they would find my body upon the floor, with tortured, blackened face, and protruding eyes and tongue.

Then the bells in my ears ceased. But those clammy fingers remained about my throat. Faintly I could hear the *thing* breathe with whistling noises, as though the exertion had been tremendous even for it. I felt myself slipping into unconsciousness and wondered if that were death.

The hollow chuckle sounded again, this time more triumphant than before.

But it broke in the middle, seemingly in surprise and consternation.

I felt the fingers loosen. The wraith seemed tense and sensing danger.

And then from the hallway sounded the pat-pat of running feet. There was a new presence in the room. It came, not tumultuously, but like the sound of silk being rubbed upon itself. Suddenly, before my weary eyes, there appeared the form of a dog. It was a shaggy dog, but it had passed from puppyhood into mature form. It, like the monster before me, was too a shadow, transparent and definite only in outline.

For just a brief moment it stopped beside me and licked my cheek with its tongue—its touch like a wisp of cool air that fans across one's face as a zephyr might stir a curtain. Instantly, however, the hair on the dog's back bristled. Its fangs were bared and its body became tense with braced feet and tail aplomb.

Straight for the monster's throat the dog hurled itself. The wraith staggered backward, trying to beat off the dog with cudgeling fists and uplifted arms. Again the dog sprang, and again and again. Each time its teeth found a mark, to rip and tear. It did not hesitate. It always was courageous.

A HORRID red appeared on the ghost's throat. Blood, itself transparent, but hued like the sullen sunset that portends a storm, dripped downward at each thrust of the dog's teeth. I watched the ghastly battle in fascination. I recognized in that shadowy animal the dog whose body I had buried far away beside the spring. I thought of the farewell caress he had given me and weak though I was from the terrible choking I had experienced, I raised myself from the floor to watch such a fight as no other man ever has witnessed.

The twisted monster staggered backward step by step, kicking and striking without avail. Slash after slash of the dog's teeth brought that horrid, evil red from the wraith's throat, that welled up and dripped downward. But though it fell to the floor I was amazed to see that it left no stain. Aside from a certain hissing that friction upon silk might make, as the dog again and again sprang at the monster, there was no other sound in that strange contest save the terrible wheezing gurgle of the giant ghost itself.

Gradually the monster was beaten back. Then, once and for all, the dog settled its fangs in the ghost's throat and clung there. The monster was borne to the floor, and

weaker and weaker its struggles became, until at last it was quiet.

The dog, after a time, released its hold and stood watching over the body. It was a strange scene—two ghosts, a man and a dog, each transparent, each intangible, each of another world.

I do not know, I cannot imagine what that second death—the death of a ghost—could be like, or where its sub-spirit could go. But there it all was, before my eyes—a malignant spirit killed by a spirit dog. For the throat of the man spirit was slashed to ribbons, all bloody and gruesome.

But somehow, before my transfixed gaze, the face was assuming a peaceful calm, as though the hateful spirit that inhabited that shadow had been destroyed for all eternity. And it seemed that the ghost itself had been released from the abomination of hate and on some plane higher than we mortals can comprehend, it had at last found peace and tranquility.

With that, the dog turned towards me and came fawning upon me, not in any attitude of humility but rather in companionship. Its tail wagged and its body wiggled in ecstasy as I reached over to stroke its head and caress its ears—quite as I am doing with this dog here. It snuggled against my body and put its cold nose against my cheek and its mouth opened to pant in delight—as a dog will. Occasionally it pricked its ears towards the heap that lay on the floor against the opposite wall. But there was neither sound nor motion there, and the dog would snuggle down against me again.

And suddenly my physical body could stand the strain no longer. I grew desperately weary and inordinately weak. Still with that ghost dog beside me, my eyes closed. I toppled from my sitting posture to the floor and I slept.

SUNLIGHT flooded the room when I awoke. The hour was well toward noon. I stretched my stiffened limbs and looked about me. The ghosts of the dog and the man were gone. For a space I thought it had been a horrid nightmare and it was with difficulty that I collected my vacant thoughts. But a threadbare rug remained scuffed into a heap and one spot, hardly larger than my hand, had not been there before—a yellowish brown stain that bore resemblance to old, dried blood.

Even then I hardly would have believed the events of the night except for the condition of my throat. It was dry and sore and swollen, and my voice, when I tried it, was harsh and croaking.

Dragging myself to my feet I made my way painfully to the mirror in the dresser, and surveyed myself. My clothes were torn and disheveled. Great circles appeared under my eyes. But chief among all the evidence of that strange experience were the marks on my throat. For at one side was the imprint of a thumb and on the other the red-blue bruises caused by the pressure of three fingers.

That day I gathered my belongings and betook myself away from that rooming house to the best hotel I could find. And that night I sought the company of other humans, where there were music and song and laughter. And when it was time for me to sleep, long after midnight, I turned on all the lights and made the room as near like day as possible.

But I have found in the years that have gone, since the amazing occurrences of that strange night, that when I am depressed or discouraged, or even in danger, I feel the presence of that dog near me, and sometimes he even becomes tangible and for a time we are great companions. Then he goes away again—I do not know where. To the spirit land, I suppose. But he always comes back when I need him.

THE stranger paused and gazed into the sun that, declining, had painted the west all crimson and gold with a thousand hues and fires. Attracted by the magnificence of its beauty I too gazed long at it. And when I again looked at the stranger he sat alone. The dog had disappeared!

"Good night," said the stranger, a wistful smile playing about his mouth. "I trust I have not bored you. It had been a difficult day for me and I was depressed."

Then, I suppose, amazement showing in my face, he added as he rose to go:

"Yes, that was he—the ghost dog. He often comes to me. It is his way. I was depressed today, and he came." He paused and looked thoughtful. "My friend, we refer to the dog as a "dumb animal," but never let us forget that they have their own way of speaking. And sometimes when the dumb speak, they say more than what we humans are capable of fully appreciating. Never let us forget that."

He smiled once more, nodded good-by, and was gone.

The Phantom Mother

(*Continued from page 14*)

I had followed her in to my desk. Sure enough, she had her suitcases packed. I saw it was no use to try to hold her.

"Why, it's no fault of mine you're leaving, Miss Tibbets. I don't see why I should give you back some of your week's board just because——"

"Oh, all right. I might've known better than to ask. But nothing on earth will keep me here," and before I could say another word—if I'd wanted to—she grabbed up her suitcases and left.

By the way she slammed the door, I could tell she was mad. But that's not a patch on what was boiling inside me. Here I was, in business hardly a month, and already I was beginning to lose. All my savings, all the work and trouble I'd been through to get the house started—was I to lose every bit of it? Not without a fight. I made up my mind right then that I'd see the owner of the house and find out all I could about what Jake Mason had told me—then act according.

THE Murtha girls came down to breakfast. They were both stenographers, and had an hour's ride to get downtown to their offices. They were nice girls, jolly and never any trouble. From the way they joked and cut up, I knew they didn't hear any of the rumpus last night.

Mrs. Peters—of course it had to be her—remarked at the table: "I wonder what's keeping Miss Tibbits. She's never as late as this. It's half past eight, and she's not down yet. Do you suppose she's sick, or something?"

"Miss Tibbits won't be in to breakfast this morning," I told her. Let her find out the truth for herself. I wasn't going to tell her.

The last two in were the new ones, Mrs. Morgan and her daughter. I was at my desk when they came downstairs. They had to pass me to get into the dining room. I watched them close out of the corner of my eye, to see if they had a complaint.

"Good morning, Mr. Bradley." She was a plump little woman, about thirty-five. She spoke with a soft voice, and her eyes always lighted up when she addressed you. "They say the first night in a strange bed is apt to be a poor one for sleep. But the saying must be wrong."

"Rested well, did you?" I was all smiles, right back at her. "That's good! Everything all right with the room?"

"Oh," the little girl spoke up, "it's such a nice big room. I like it much better than Mrs. Hawks', where we were before. There's bats flying around, all night——"

"Bats?" What do you mean, child?" I asked, quick as a flash.

"She means that the curtains were reflected from the light of the lamp post out front, Mr. Kane. She called my attention to the shadows—the curtains on the back wall. Bats, she called them. We watched them for awhile, and then we fell asleep. Didn't we, darling?"

"Nice bats they were—big ones with five wings, and——"

"Come, darling. The dining room closes at nine. It's almost nine now. We won't get breakfast unless we hurry."

The mother smiled at me, and took the child's hand, walking her into the dining room. I smiled back, but I was a much troubled man. What did that child mean by that crack about bats, anyway?

Half past ten I figured was as early as I could call on anybody respectable, so I took a trolley downtown and got to Miss Underhill's home just about then. Miss Underhill was the owner. I had met her at the agent's office the day I signed the lease.

She lived in an apartment. I rang the bell, and a maid let me in, telling me I'd have to wait. Miss Underhill was still at breakfast.

IN a few minutes she came into the living room where I was waiting for her. She seemed younger than when I had met her before. Maybe it was the freshness from a night's sleep, but she

didn't look a day over twenty-five, to me.

"Mr. Bradley," she said, giving me a hand-shake hard, like a man's, "what brings you here so early in the morning? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Plenty. I might as well tell you straight off I didn't come to make a social call. This morning I lost a tenant, and it'll be only a question of time before I lose more, unless something is done. The one that went, claimed the house was haunted."

She had big eyes and dark hair, and a chin that was tilted up a bit too far. A frown came into her forehead. She lowered her eyes—turned them away to avoid mine.

"You've heard it, then? I thought that at last we might be rid——"

"The moans and the raps? Last night I heard 'em—plenty. Yes. And what I want to know is, where do I stand?"

She turned her head back to me, favored me with a straight look. "You have a two-year lease on the house, with an option to buy. I think that is binding enough, Mr. Bradley."

I felt my blood boil. If she had been a man, I'd have let her know what was going through my mind. But with a woman—I didn't like that hard-boiled attitude she was showing, and I wanted to tell her so.

"I know," I said, swallowing hard. "I'm not trying to duck anything that's a fair and square business proposition. But I thought maybe there was something about the house you could tell me, that would throw some light on the haunt."

She looked relieved. I could have told her right there I'd find a way to break that lease if I wanted to. But the truth is I liked the house, and I wanted to keep it. There'd be money in it, once I got established firmly.

"I like you, Mr. Bradley. Maybe there is something about the house that could be cleared away if we only knew. A spiritualist medium once told me that if I'd hold a series of séances in the house, maybe I'd find an earthbound spirit struggling for release. But I've never had the courage, perhaps because I don't believe in such things."

"Spiritualist business never made a hit with me, either. Whatever it is, can be fought with two clean fists, I say. Only, I'd have to know what I'm fighting before I go ahead."

She settled herself more comfortably in her chair.

"I'll give you the history of the house—gladly. My father built it. He was a paper manufacturer. He sold his business and retired, when he was about forty-five. This was about twenty years ago. He built the house then. There were only Dad and Mother and me. He lived in it only three years. Pneumonia took him off.

"Mother and I stayed right on there. It was the only home we had. You see, Mr. Bradley, Dad left Mother well fixed with this world's goods. We lived there until I was eight, when Mother was taken. That's about fifteen years ago. After her death I lived with an aunt until I was able to take care of myself.

"I say Mother was well fixed. She never earned her living. So far as I remember, we always had plenty. But, when Mother died, I was left with nothing but the house. If I hadn't learned to earn my own living, I'd be in straightened circumstances, for the house has stood idle for years. I've made my way, for I'm able to get a good price for my work. I paint lamp-shades—design them.

"And there you are, Mr. Bradley. I haven't tried to live in the house. Freeman Street is too far out of touch with things. I hope some day to sell the house—but always there are those moans and things to scare off people. There. I've told you all I know."

"And that ain't much," I commented. For a few minutes I remained thoughtful. "Well," I said, reaching for my hat, "I don't see anything to do except wait and see what happens. For a man of my disposition, I'd rather fight and know I was licked than sit around waiting for a spook. But that's all I can do, I guess. You can be sure, though, if I get half a chance I'll collar that spook and kill it once and for all."

There was more talk, mostly friendly chatter, then I took my hat and bid her good-day.

OUTSIDE, in the fresh air, I got mad again. I never was a hand to deal with women. That one with her big eyes and frank face, and frank manner, held me in a kind of a charm.

Well, I didn't rest idle. I looked up Robert T. Underhill, the girl's father. I found that he had owned the Underhill Paper Company, still operating under that name to this day; and had sold it for a quarter of a million. He must have laid by some of his profits, but even if he didn't, then he must have stepped some to get rid of that purchase money before he died—and his wife must have done likewise to have spent it all. The house didn't cost more than $40,000 to build. The question stood out in my mind: What became of all that money?

I had to pass that point. I went home, and found three people waiting to look at rooms. I showed them, and landed two of the three. For the rest of that day I went about my business, hoping for the best.

That night nothing happened. Nothing happened for a week, and I began to think nothing would. It was coming summer time, people were looking for places to live outside the hot city proper, and I got a new one or two every day. So I began to look at life through rosy glasses.

Miss Tibbits' room was the last one to rent. I felt somehow that I'd better let well enough alone, and to tell the truth I had a kind of a superstition about it. But the day came when I was full up, except for number eight. A dollar is a dollar, superstitions regardless. When I got a call for a room one afternoon, I showed Miss Tibbits' room—and rented it.

The new tenant was a man named Clausen, who told me he was a timekeeper for the Transatlantic Transport Company. He was stout, and a little short-spoken and grouchy. The thin blue lines on his nose told me why. But that was none of my affair. If he paid his board and minded his own business, that's all I asked.

I took quite a fancy to the Morgan child. Of a morning she'd come up to my desk—her head didn't come much over the top of it—and put her hands folded,

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onto the desk-top. With her chin on her hands she'd look up at me kind of shy, and say: "The bats were awful last night, Mr. Bradley. And big! There was one had ten wings and——" She'd wait to see if I was listening to her, then go on: "And it flew, oh—all over the room. I quickly put my head under the covers—and the next thing I knew it was this morning." She smiled a dimply smile.

"Were they, dear?" Me and that "dear" stuff didn't get on well at all, but I couldn't talk rough to the kid. "Did Mother see them, too?" I asked that as much for business reasons as to amuse the child.

"Oh-h, yes. The other night she said she thought she heard them flying around, too. I didn't hear anything. Old people like you and Mother gets queer ideas, though, don't they, Mr. Bradley?"

That one floored me. "They do that. Run along and play now, Dorothy. This old man's got work to do."

The wise crack was lost on her. She went out skipping, more from the happiness that was in her heart than for anything that I had said to her, I was sure.

Her mother I couldn't quite figure out. She said she was a widow, that she was living on her husband's insurance money. But often she'd go out of a night dressed plain—not for a party or a good time—and she wouldn't get in 'til the small hours of the morning. Maybe she had a night job checking coats at a dance hall, or something. Anyway, I was wasting my time butting into other people's business. With the house full, and planning three meals a day and running the help and answering complaints about shortages of linen and the like, I had enough to tend to.

THEN it happened. The third night Clausen was in the house, I heard a commotion and a rumble of voices and a roar like a bull was let loose, and mad at that. It was around ten o'clock; I was just getting ready for bed.

I rushed out of my room, and around front. There was Clausen coming down the stairs, pale as milk, even to his blue nose. "Hey!" he roared, when he had seen me, "go up——here, what's it mean, hey? She like to've killed me, that's what! I'll have the law on the place——" All the time he talked, he waved his fist before his face. His collar was half off, his necktie streaming, his shoes were unlaced, and he was in a fine fever.

"Calm yourself — calm yourself, man. You're talking in bunches. What's the row?"

"Row? There's row enough! I'm sitting in my room, smoking my pipe and not bothering nobody. I hear a noise in the closet—a groan-like—an' I look up to see what's up. And as I look, there coming through the door—*through* the closed door, mind you—I see an old woman. She had her fists doubled, an' she'd have come over an' choked me if I hadn't yelled. She faded when I yelled, but she's up there yet, she's up there. I'll have the law on the place!"

A scream sounded over my shoulder, upstairs. "Ghosts! The place is haunted! Let me out—let me out!" And another voice: "The nice man next door said the house had ghosts, and now I know it. I won't stay here another hour. Lily, get my bags and I'll pack right now——"

Clausen had stamped out the front door, so he was a worry removed for the time being. But the commotion upstairs was enough for ten like me to handle. "Ghosts!" I heard upstairs, and "Spooks! We'll be murdered in our beds!" and plenty more. The cries were taken up from one end of the house to the other, 'til it seemed that everybody upstairs had gone hysterical.

First one bolted past me, a little woman carrying her handbag, her coat thrown on over her night-dress. Then the two old maids in the top front—screaming at the top of their lungs. The Morrison boys followed. I cornered one of them and told him he was acting nutty, but he shoved me away and bolted for the door. The procession kept up, with me having heart failure all over again, every next minute.

That was to be the outcome of my work, was it? My money and time and all—— Well, you can bet I didn't sleep that night.

NEXT morning I took stock of who was left. The Peters, the Murtha girls, Mrs. Morgan and the child, an old bookkeeper who was deaf as a post, name of Henley, and that was all.

I don't know how I got through that day. I first wanted to take my lease downtown and tear it up in front of that doll-faced Underhill woman. And I meant to hold her up for the two thousand-odd I had spent fitting up the place. I'd have done it, too, if I hadn't woke up to sense in time. No use making myself liable to jail that way. Then I thought of going over to Jake Mason's and beating him up so he wouldn't forget to mind his own business in a hurry—and I was on the point of going, only Ben, the house-man, called me back to stop a leak in the bathroom, third front.

By nightfall I was a sick man. Not that I'd lost my nerve, understand. But when I saw all that profit sweeping out from under me, and with nothing I could fight to hold it—why, I was squeamish all over.

Right after dinner Mrs. Morgan says to me, coming out of the dining room: "I'll be out a little while tonight, Mr. Bradley. Not long. 'Til about nine-thirty. I'm leaving Dorothy alone. She'll go to sleep, without any trouble. But in view of—in view of last night—would you sort of keep an eye on her 'til I get back?"

"Certainly," I said. "Don't you worry about her. She'll be all right."

"Thank you so much," and with that she left.

I didn't know what I was to do about the kid—go up and sit outside her door, or slip into the room and watch by her bedside in case she woke up and asked for a drink of water or something—but I had to be accommodating to the few that were left to me.

The evening dragged along. I sat at my desk from the time dinner was over 'til ten and after. I was within sound of the Morgans' room, so that I could have heard the child if she cried for anything.

I had no company but my thoughts, and the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to take an axe and break up the whole business and go back selling insurance.

MRS. MORGAN came in, and smiled her thanks. She wasn't up two minutes before I heard her screaming and yelling. Over the banister she called, like she was frantic:

"Mr. Bradley — Mr. Bradley! What have you done with my child?"

I was on my feet in a second. "What have I done? Why, nothing! Ain't she there?" I took the steps two at a time.

"I left her asleep in her bed. And look—look there——" Inside the room, she pointed to the child's small bed. The covers were disturbed, all right. But no child was in it. I glanced around the room hurriedly—no sign of the little one.

"You sure she was here when you left?" I asked. I had to say something. The truth was, I felt a lump in my throat, for I had come to love the child like she was my own.

"Of course, Mr. Bradley. But when I unlocked the door she—she wasn't——"

"Oh, you had the door locked, then?"

"Yes. I know you have a pass key that would let you in in case she called you. I didn't want to take chances. It's a habit of mine to lock my room whenever I go out. Oh, Mr. Bradley what will I *do?"*

She began wringing her hands, and burst out wailing. I couldn't blame her, poor woman.

I did some rapid figuring. "Well, if she was here in a locked room when you left, and she's not here now, I'm sure she can't be far from here. You wait a minute, Mrs. Morgan."

The breaking point had come. I would stand no more—and I wouldn't rest 'til I had located that child. I went down to the cellar and got the biggest axe I could find.

Back in Mrs. Morgan's room, I went to work. I had a particular grudge against a certain corner of that room—the corner next to Miss Tibbits' room. I took one hefty swing of that axe, and drove it through the wall, a foot or so above my head.

"Oh, Mr. Bradley, what—what are you doing?"

"I'm going to find your child, and I'm going to do it the only way I know how. The kid couldn't get out the door, because it was locked. And there's no other way she could get out, unless she jumped from a front window—which I'd have heard if she did. I figure she's been *spirited* away. And I'm going after her!"

I hacked away, hacked hard, driving every ounce of my rage at this spook business whenever I landed a blow. I cut through clap-boards and plaster, cut and hacked until I had hewn away a hollow space big enough to get my shoulders through.

If I'd been less mad, I'd have thought it strange I didn't hack right through the outside wall of the house, and not struck a hollow space. As it was, I stuck my head through the hole I had made, and no sooner was it through than I heard a voice call from that blackened space ahead:

"Hello, Mr. Bradley. Come see the nice bat—no, she's gone! Can I come out now, Mr. Bradley?"

It was Dorothy! You could have

knocked me over with a feather, I was that weak from the reaction of finding her.

Her mother had heard, and came running up, pulling at my shoulder to get a look in that opening.

"Stand back, Mrs. Morgan, or you'll get hit. I don't know how she get in, but I'll mighty soon have her out."

And I did. She was in her mother's arms—her mother sobbing tears of joy as if her heart would break—inside five minutes. I left them and took a look inside that hole.

BY the light of a match I saw that the child had been in a secret passage between the outer wall of the house, and the Morgan's room and Miss Tibbits', extending to the end of Miss Tibbits' closet. Careful search showed me a narrow door that opened from the rear of the closet in the Morgans' room. The door would be hard to find, even by some one looking for it, due to the fact that it was cleverly hidden by the back wall of the closet.

Nothing was inside the passage, except some bundles, all covered with dust—and a few papers scattered over the floor. That much I could see. But I could not see how the child had got into the passage.

When I got outside, the mother had calmed down, and was listening to what the child was telling her.

"And this big lady bat—like an old lady she was, Mother, with long gray hair and a nightgown that I could see was made of smoke—she took me by the hand, and she said: 'At last, my child—at last. You shall be denied no longer—I shall rest in peace. Come,' and she took me by the hand, Mother, and she led me into the closet where all my dresses hang. We went right through the back of the closet. There didn't seem to be any back to the closet, Mother. And when we got to the end of the hallway back there, she picked up a bundle, Mother, and broke the string. There was a lot of papers tied up. She took a handful of these and then dropped them over my head, so they fell on the floor all around me. And she picked them all up and dropped them over my head again. 'Forgive me, my child—forgive. You shall not be in want now, good-by. I can rest in peace now,' and Mother—I didn't see her any more. I was looking for her when I saw Mr. Bradley."

That was the darndest tale I ever heard. But, there was the child. I had to believe that. And I had seen the papers myself—papers——

I was inside that closet and the passage in a jiffy. I picked up what I found on the floor—bonds they were! I held in my hand then the equivalent of ten years' insurance premiums, that I might have collected myself. I wiped the dust from those bundles with my bare hands—bonds, all of them. American Tel. & Tel., U. S. Steel—I knew them all. I'm no fool.

It didn't take me long to see where my duty lay. I called Miss Underhill on the telephone, and about twelve that night she came. I told her I thought we had laid the ghost at last—and, indeed, we had.

That doll-faced youngster had brains, in spite of the way she looked. She took up a bundle of the bonds, and in a flash she said: "Dad's fortune! Mother died without a will—without telling me where Dad's money was. He always distrusted banks. That must be why he had that secret passage built. And Mother's spirit must have been earthbound, 'til she told me where the fortune was! That medium told me the idea of those who have gone over is sometimes hazy. Mother must have taken that little child upstairs for me, for I was just her age when Mother died. Oh, Mr. Bradley, how splendid of you to——" and she reached over and gave me a hug, the like of which I haven't felt since, and don't expect to, ever.

And that's where it ends. Miss Underhill deeded me the house, and now that the spook is laid, I have been able to build up a nice, comfortable business for myself.

The Flaming Specter of Briarwood

(*Continued from page 32*)

the better element in the village, but it was said—and Greg told me some of it—that many a county political campaign was mapped out in Sam Walton's back room.

Greg and I had frequently played billiards there and had seen enough to know that Sam managed to sell liquor on the side. It was, unquestionably, terrible stuff. The river men were his best customers.

I dropped into his place and got some cigars.

"By the way, Mr. Walton," I said, "whatever became of that chap, Peter Ott?"

I WAS totally unprepared for the result of this question. Walton started as if he had been slapped and glared at me. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you want of him, Mr. Bronson?" he demanded.

"I don't want him. I want to find out what sort of a man he is."

"He's a dead man," grunted Walton.

"The kind that tell no tales?" I said, sharply, but it didn't seem to worry him at all.

"He won't tell none. They hung him for murder."

"Lynched?"

"No, hung him down at State Prison, long while ago. He robbed a bank and killed the watchman. But they never could make that bird tell where he hid the money."

"Oh, then he wasn't exactly a saint?"

"Say, what's the idea? You know something about him?"

"Not at all, we were talking about how his testimony pinned the guilt on Clark Kane—his buying from Kane the murdered man's watch, and I wondered if he were a reliable witness?"

"Aw, that silly rot about Kane comin' back to earth? Lotta bunk. Some wise guys are playin' jokes," declared Walton.

I agreed with him as being the easiest way to cut off the conversation.

I told Greg about it.

"You should have asked me. I knew that Ott was hanged—he was apparently without any criminal record at the time his testimony convicted Kane—if that's what you mean. I see you are bound to prove that Kane has come back from the dead."

"I am bound to find out—if humanly possible—whether he has come back from the dead," I corrected him.

There was so much talk going on that finally one of the three local clergymen, the Reverend John Unger, preached a sermon against superstition. Gregory printed it in full. The Reverend Unger sought to quell the fears of his people by assuring them that there was no coming back from the dead until Gabriel sounded the resurrection trumpet. His text was from Genesis 3-19:

> In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

It was quite a sermon, in a way, and no doubt it helped many to get over their uncanny feeling that perhaps the dead man could, and had, come back to avenge himself.

However, this calm was not for long. Within the week there appeared across the white clapboards of the church where the Reverend Unger preached, another message—and, as usual, it was burned into the wood. It was a portion of the third verse of the fifth chapter of Corinthians, as follows:

> For I verily, as absent in the body, but present in the spirit, have judged already.

Whoever burned this message into the white side of the church had underlined the words as shown.

There was more excitement over this than over the burning of the court house, or the branding of Colonel Jacobs, foreman of the jury that convicted Kane.

Greg got no picture of this. The Reverend Unger himself, hearing of it, hastened thither and painted out the message, after filling in the indentations made by the fire with putty.

The new, white-painted spot was there and the puttied crevices still dimly formed the letters, so that people continued to flock about it and study it.

To find footprints was out of the question, so many had milled around in front of the spot.

"It's all nonsense," the Reverend Unger declared to Greg while I was in the office. He had called to ask Greg to keep the story out of the Briarwood *Banner* without success.

"It is not difficult to find one argument to offset another, all within the Scriptures," Greg agreed.

"I mean it is nonsense for people to think that that murderer, Kane, could

have done this, even could he have come back from the dead," the minister persisted. "This Kane was an uneducated river man; I doubt if he ever went to church, or knew any of the Bible."

"He testified, at his trial, that he had been studying," I suggested.

"He was trying to cover up his absent orgies," the minister said, as if that explained everything.

A GROUP, discussing this with the Reverend Unger, not long after this time, seemed to be widely split as to opinions. Miss Quinby, the inoffensive old maid who lived almost like a recluse, chanced along and listened, after which she declared that the minister was quite right—there was nothing supernatural about it.

"As if the good Lord would ever let a murderer come back to earth and frighten innocent, God-fearing people!" Miss Quinby said, with feeling.

Next morning the picket fence in front of Miss Quinby's great house was torn down—the pickets were ripped off and arranged to make, across her lawn and flower beds, two mammoth letters:

C. K.

Miss Quinby was so frightened that she took to her bed.

I made a careful study of the lawn and flower beds, but others had been there and I could see no unusual footprints.

"It will get so," our landlady whispered, "that a soul won't dare speak of it at all, or breathe the name of Clark Kane."

A great many others felt quite like this.

I am a light sleeper. Several times I heard Greg at my bedroom door, opening it slightly and peering in. He seemed to be watching me queerly.

"Look here, Greg," I said one time, in the middle of the night when he awakened me by softly opening my door, "what's the idea of watching me sleep? I'm no infant; I won't fall out of bed."

Greg came in and sat on the edge of my bed. He grinned rather sheepishly. I sat up and stared at him.

"You boob—you've been wondering if I were the 'ghost' of Clark Kane—is that it?"

"Something like that," he admitted. "At least you might have a hand in it, but that was just a wild hazard. I see you couldn't be mixed up in it. I'm trying to figure it all out."

"So am I," I admitted, still amused at my chum's suspicion that I might have been helping along Briarwood's ghost scare.

"You might have helped later, after the thing started—just for a joke. That's why I wanted to make sure."

I made Greg understand that I wanted only the truth of the matter.

"Can't you see? Here's a haunted village—a whole village haunted, and scores of people pestered. One thing is certain—no boy would have sufficient intelligence to do all of these things that have been done. There is a doubt in the minds of many, including yourself, that Clark Kane was guilty of the murder of Orville Plaistead. Kane did threaten in court, after he was condemned to die on the scaffold, that he would come back after death and 'get square.' Now comes that warning, claiming that he is back from the spirit world. Greg, it's great stuff, whether a mere hoax, or whether the real goods."

Greg agreed.

"Another thing—the way Kane worded his threat, or curse. If you take his words accurately, you will see that he spoke as no uneducated man could speak. Did you ever think of that?"

"I sure did. That's why I wrote the editorial expressing possible doubt as to the man's guilt—the thing that started Matthew Barton after me."

"Things don't match up just right. The man swore he was away, taking a course of study, during those times he left, but no hint of it was found at his home. He wouldn't keep it a secret at home from his mother—especially if she had been a school teacher once, as they say she was."

"Somebody is going to have a big laugh on us sometime when we find out who is doing all of this," Greg said.

"Rather serious offense, to brand a man, to burn a court house—arson, and so on. The party who is committing this hoax will never willingly admit it," I told him, and he agreed.

While talking with Greg about this I had an idea that I might find some clue in the old shack Kane had lived in, if I could get the present occupants to permit me to search it. I said nothing to Greg about my intentions.

COLONEL JACOBS returned and his forehead had received clever treatment. Doubtless skin grafting had been used and few signs of a scar were visible and no signs, so far as I could see, of the letters C. K. But the Colonel would flush and glare whenever anyone happened to stare directly at his forehead for a moment.

The scar had been eradicated rather successfully but the memory of that brand was seared indelibly in his mind—I am certain of that.

And to put emphasis upon what had happened to him, so it seemed, the very next morning after Jacobs got back, seven doors of seven homes in the village and environs, bore the burned-in initials:

C. K.

Each house thus marked on its front door was the home of a juror who sat on Clark Kane's case!

It served to remind them that their foreman had been branded and to fill them with a sickening fear that they, too, might also be branded.

I examined these initials. That they were burned in by living flame there could be no doubt. Certain acids will eat into wood. The Colonel's forehead was burned with acid. But all of the marks on wood were made with fire and varied in depth and width in a most peculiar manner. At first I had thought that some smooth pointed piece of heated metal had done this, but later I became convinced that it was done by a direct, small flame.

Up to the present time there had been but one thing which really hinted at the supernatural—that was the white and seemingly floating figure that Greg and I saw disappearing from Colonel Jacobs at the time he had been branded.

The burning of the court house, all of the messages burned in wood, the tearing up of that poor old maid's fence—all of these things were nothing but what a mortal could easily do.

The village, many claimed, was actually haunted by the returned spirit of the dead Clark Kane, and yet it was not the usual sort of thing, such as visions of hands or white forms or things of that sort.

Judge Atwood, who sentenced Kane, received a post card. On the back was written:

"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."

THERE was nothing superstitious about Judge Atwood. He marched down to the office of Major Vickers, deputy sheriff and our local police officer, and turned over the card. The town clerk and others made every effort to find out something by means of the handwriting.

It seemed like the best opportunity thus far to trace whoever it was that was doing these things and keeping the entire village considerably upset.

Handwriting of all sorts, from the tax collector's office, and a dozen other places, was studied, without finding a clue. The inevitable initials, C. K. had been signed to the card, which had been found in the box inside the postoffice door. It had been slipped through the mailing slit after closing hours.

Gregory wrote to George Southey, of Parrsboro. Southey was the lawyer who tried to defend Kane. Southey sent Gregory two letters that Kane had written to him while he was awaiting trial.

The handwriting was the same as the handwriting on Judge Atwood's post-card!

Even the crusty old Judge admitted that it was the same.

"Mind you," he said, "I don't say Kane wrote that card to me, living or dead—but I say that whoever did write it most certainly copied Kane's style of penmanship to perfection!"

I borrowed both the card and letters and sent them on to New York to a noted handwriting specialist—one who had served in many a hard-fought court battle as an expert. When he returned them he wrote:

> Not a copy as you suggest. There is no doubt in my mind but what the same hand wrote both.

I had not written to him of any of the circumstances. But I promptly wrote back and informed this expert that the man who wrote the letters had been dead about eighteen months.

It was like this old expert—his reply—which was simply:

> Dead or alive—the same hand wrote both.

JUDGE Atwood knew of this expert. He knew his reputation, and the old judge was so rattled that he could scarcely speak when he saw this reply.

Clark Kane had lived just in the outskirts of Briarwood village on the bank

of the river, well below the collection of shacks and huts and raft houses that lined the banks opposite the town. I had never prowled about the place but had passed it in a small boat while fishing. I drove down there along the river road and to my surprise I found the place overgrown with vines and weeds and boarded up. Thinking it best to make sure, I drove back and asked Greg about it.

"Great idea—wait until Sunday and I'll go with you," he said when he learned I wanted to search the place. He explained that the land had not belonged to Kane. Few, if any, of the poor dwellers on the river bank owned the land. As to the house, he didn't know who owned it now, if anyone at all.

We went there the following Sunday, forced the door, and knocked boards from the windows. The place was damp and dusty and was probably just as the authorities had left it after they had searched it, following Kane's arrest.

There was but little furniture. Two sleeping rooms, a main room and a small kitchen was all there was to the place.

An old newspaper dated before Kane's arrest and a paper-covered government pamphlet on navigation along that section of the river was all the reading matter we could find except for a few old calendars on the wall.

"He must have had some tools for getting his clams, for his fishing," I insisted.

"Probably they have since been stolen."

"If he went away from the house all day after his mother died wouldn't he hide his valuables, or what he considered valuable? Merely locking the doors wouldn't keep thieves away," I argued.

"Where could he hide anything?"

We tried walls and floor boards and two box closets, but aside from scanty kitchen utensils, now rusted, and a few dishes, there was nothing at all.

We went out and looked under the house but could see no place to hide anything. We looked up on the roof. There was nothing to indicate a hiding place. Greg went inside and then came out.

"There's a space between the ceiling in the big room and the roof," he said.

We went inside again and looked around. I stepped on a chair and thence to the table against the wall. From this place I could reach the weathered boarding above, that formed the ceiling of the room. Pushing sharply up against the wide middle board, it flew up so quickly that I lost my balance and would have had a severe fall if Greg hadn't caught me.

I hauled up the chair, stood that on the table and from that could thrust head and shoulders into the opening.

"Get up here and help me," I cried and together we lifted down a sizeable box—about the size of a wooden soap box, but it was hinged and painted green. It was also padlocked.

"We ought to take it to the authorities," Greg declared, "but we'll take a look at it first."

It was not difficult to force off the stapled straps that held the lock. A piece of canvas, evidently cut from an old sail, was fitted inside, over the top. We eagerly removed it and the first thing we saw was a set of books!

"Look—a correspondence course in electrical engineering!" cried Greg.

IT was a set of text books supplied by one of the best known technical correspondence schools. Then we found papers showing that Kane had nearly completed this course. We found letters to him addressed to Chicago, St. Louis, Buffalo, and Detroit! These were from his mother, thanking him for money he had sent her, asking how he was getting on in his work and the usual sort of things a mother would write under the circumstances.

Greg and I read all of those letters and then sat back and stared at each other for a moment.

"I tell you," Greg cried, springing up, "that Clark Kane wasn't guilty! If he told the truth about studying, and being away working and studying, then he told the truth when he said he didn't kill Plaistead!"

"No argument there, old man," I said, "but that doesn't change one quite important fact—the poor fellow is dead."

"I know he's dead. But wait until I publish this story. Wait until I dig up my editorial in which I hinted that I didn't believe there was sufficient evidence for the verdict!"

We searched farther up over the room and found a smaller box with only a few books, all school books of an older period than Kane would have used. They bore the name "Harriett Dawson." We surmised that they had been his mother's books, especially as the dates in them were just about right to coincide with the date a woman of her age would have been using then.

We had cleared up one point—Clark Kane was not an ignorant riverman; he had not lied in his court testimony; he was not a bum and loafer, and would not have to resort to killing a man to get money because he could work and earn it.

The story did create a great sensation. I could not resist the chance to call on the Reverend Unger and ask him what he thought of his theory that Kane had sworn to being away studying and working to cover up wild orgies.

"Man is only mortal and prone to err; we all make mistakes," he said. "Who are you and what are you trying to do?" he added, as he glared at me.

I tried to explain my interest in this mysterious affair. He told me that it was sinful to believe in ghosts but added that if he had wronged the unfortunate Kane in any way he was sincerely repentant, and I could see that the man was sincere.

Judge Atwood, interviewed, shrugged his shoulders.

"The jury didn't know about this. Who would believe Kane was the sort of a fellow to study and seek to better himself?" he asked.

Matthew Barton dropped in to see Greg on appointment and Greg had me hiding in the little storeroom where I had once before accidentally overheard Barton threaten him.

Barton started off at once by telling

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Greg to get wise and drop all that foolishness about the murderer, Kane.

"He didn't murder Plaistead," Gregory answered.

"What's that? What do you mean!" and from the sound of the voice I knew that Briarwood's great "pooh-bah" was hard hit and frightened.

"Doesn't look that way. But why should you be interested? You did your duty as prosecuting attorney. You got the man convicted and sent him to his death. He would have been hanged if he hadn't been accidentally burned to death a few weeks before it was time for him to go to the scaffold. Why bother more about it, Mr. Barton?"

"I want it stopped—that's why!"

"Give me a reason?"

"It's silly—it isn't dignified. I'm going to run for governor and I don't want it said that I come from the haunted village. Can't you understand that?"

"It is interesting reading, sensational, true, is building my circulation and I shall continue. Now, what do you propose to do about it?"

"See that the bank gives you no more loans—see that our merchants give you no advertising—give you no county printing, or any backing. You'll starve and get out within a few months, now mark what I say!"

Gregory got up and opened the door to the store room. I came out as he beckoned and he introduced me as his partner in the enterprise.

Barton turned to me and advised me to make my partner drop the whole "silly Kane tomfoolery."

"Sorry, Mr. Barton, but I advised him to keep it up. I have a hunch that this 'haunt' has only started in, and that there'll be some lively times around here for a long while."

He repeated the same threats.

"Look my partner up, financially," Greg advised. "We can run this paper for fifty years and lose money every week."

Barton changed and started to plead with us and I could see that he was really greatly worked up over it.

Nothing came of this and Barton went away in a rage.

GREGORY printed the threats in an editorial and stated that he presumed the advertisers who dropped out were such men as danced whenever Barton or others of the political ring snapped the whip.

And then Greg got a letter which read:

> Thanks for your fairness. Here's a chance for you to prove that ghosts can write very material letters. If you had looked in the south-west corner of the attic where you found my books, you would have found a small ball of linen cord. Go and find it now, unwind it and keep the contents—there are seven. C. K.

I had been out on the river that day and Greg was down at the landing awaiting me when I got in. He showed me the letter.

"And did you find it?" I asked.

"Not yet; I want witnesses. I'm going to take the Reverend John Kingsley and Miss Atwood with us."

I advised him not to drag Miss Atwood into it. She was a niece of Judge Atwood. More than that, she was secretly engaged to Greg—secretly because she was not quite of age and the Judge was her guardian and objected to Greg.

THE Awards to Readers for Opinions of GHOST STORIES, issue of January, 1927, went to:

1st award of $10.00

MISS MARGARET BENTON LARRY

of San Diego, California

2nd award of $5.00

MR. HENRY SCHMIDT

of Toledo, Ohio

3rd award of $3.00

MRS. THOMAS E. HANNAH

of Winnepeg, Manitoba, Canada

On the way up to the house we stopped and called on Miss Quinby and showed her the letter. When we asked her to come with us as a witness, she was frightened.

"I wouldn't have anything to do with it. I'd be afraid to go in his house. No, I can't," she declared, and there was no doubt but what she was really frightened.

WE got a Mrs. Stevenson to go with us and took along in the car a short ladder and a powerful flashlight. The Reverend Kingsley went up first and Mrs. Stevenson stood on the ladder and watched.

"Yes, sir—here's a ball of string!" I heard the minister shout.

When he came down and we brushed the dust from him and from the ball of cord, we slowly unwound it.

"Nothing in it!" laughed Greg, uneasily, as it was reduced to a tiny ball.

"It's wound on a rag!" Mrs. Stevenson said, in disgust. Then: "No—there's something in the rag," she cried, pulling away the last of the cord.

We bent over it in the glare of the flashlight as she carefully opened up the rag and disclosed pearls!

"Pearls!" exclaimed Greg.

"Very good ones, too—worth fifty or more dollars each, if I am any judge," the minister declared.

"Look—seven of them!" cried Greg.

We looked at the seven pearls and at the letter Greg had received. The writer had written "There are seven."

Again there was excitement in Briarwood.

The letter unquestionably came through the mails.

Greg made a big spread of the story and there was a crowd in to see the pearls. The minister and Mrs. Stevenson went before a notary and took oath on the truth of their part in the matter.

In his article, Gregory stated:

"Since C. K. had written, whether with living or ghostly fingers it doesn't matter in this instance, that the seven pearls are mine, I shall turn them over to the Reverend Kingsley to be sold and the proceeds to go to charity."

That started tongues wagging.

If he had "planted" those pearls, the trick would cost him about seven or eight hundred dollars.

Some hinted that when we found the books, we planted the pearls, but none could explain about the letter which was in Kane's handwriting—the same as on the postcard Judge Atwood had received.

"If Kane were alive he'd need the money," Major Vickers remarked, and that set me thinking of the possibility that Kane might not have been burned to death in the prison fire. But how could he hang around the village all these months and not be seen?

"You don't think he's alive?" I asked.

"We know he's dead," the Major snapped.

"He is dead—that is sure enough," Greg put in.

And while this sensation was at its height I made a trip to the State Prison and got to see the Warden.

When I told him what I wanted he seemed surprised.

"That's strange, Mr. Bronson," he exclaimed when I had given him my letter of introduction, "I've had three people from your village down here within the last two months, each one wanting to

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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Three awards will be made promptly. See that your opinion gets one of them.

make sure that Clark Kane is dead."

"I suppose it's a natural train of thought—that the man might have escaped in the fire. By the way, who were they? Perhaps some of my friends who are working on this with me forgot to tell me and I've made an unnecessary trip."

I was anxious to find out.

"First a Mrs. Barton came to find out about it."

"Barton? Not the Honorable Matthew Barton's wife—the Matthew Barton who is to be a candidate for governor?"

"I wonder?" the Warden answered, "I never thought of that. He does live in Briarwood.

I GOT him to describe her, but all he could remember was that she wore dark clothes, a veil and had very light yellow hair. Mrs. Barton had yellow hair. I saw but little of her as she did not go out much. I was thinking that probably her husband sent her when the Warden told me that Matthew Barton had also been down and asked the same question.

"Did they come together?"

"Oh, no—weeks apart. In fact a man named Walton came in between them."

"Walton?" I couldn't place him for a moment. "Oh, Sam Walton?"

"I don't remember."

"Did he have a white streak of hair over one ear and the rest black?"

"Yes, he's the man!"

I questioned him further.

"I'll tell you as I told the other three—there is no doubt that the man Kane was burned to death. We had the three burned bodies, and every other prisoner accounted for."

"But look here—if Kane was sentenced to death he would be in the death house, not in the workshop," I exclaimed.

The Warden smiled.

"No one else thought to ask that. I'll tell you; but unless it is necessary I rather you wouldn't explain it outside. I suppose I was within my rights, but at any rate, we found out that Kane was rather of an expert mechanically and he had helped us on a number of breakdowns in the machinery.

"The day of the fire we had him in the pit at the far end of the workshop, going over one of our units for dynamo trouble. The fire spread so rapidly through our broom and varnish material that it cut off Kane and two others—a guard named Hickson and a lifer by the name of Dutton."

"Then there is no doubt of it," I said.

"Not a particle of doubt. We checked up—not another man missing. We found the remains of the guard's carbine and of the tools Kane was working with, along with the bodies. The lifer was just a helper who stood about, to hand down tools."

I thanked the Warden and to his questions told him what surprising things had happened in town. He laughed and said we would some day doubtless catch the joker and it would prove to be the last person we would suspect.

WHEN I got back and told Greg that Mr. and Mrs. Barton had gone down separately to find out if it was a certainty that Kane was burned to death, and that Sam Walton was also down, Greg became very grave.

"Listen, Lew—there's something that has happened, something that some one person, or several persons connected with this Kane case, do not want known."

"It sure looks that way, Greg."

"If we ever get at the bottom of this mystery it's going to be a corker. Just how near are you to believing that this so-called 'haunt' is something supernatural?"

"We have to have absolute proof——"

"I know, I know—when it comes to making a report to the Society for Psychic Research, you have to have facts. But as to your own self—do you believe there is something spooky, something supernatural in all of this?"

"It looks to me," I admitted, "as if the village is actually haunted by the returned spirit of Clark Kane."

"Humph!" said Greg.

"How about yourself?" I asked.

"I don't believe it's the prank or the joke of anyone, either of Briarwood, or elsewhere. I'm about convinced now that this Clark Kane was not guilty of the murder, and that he has come back from the dead to keep his living promise. His spirit seems to do very material things—that's one queer point."

"And that is why I'm beginning to believe it is supernatural—because the things that have happened are decidedly material."

"We can only sit tight and wait for the next thing to happen. I'm sure something else will happen before long," Greg declared.

He was right. Something did happen. Several things happened.

The first was a rumor that Sam Walton was acting queer, that he was "seeing things."

I wanted to find out first hand, as I couldn't see any connection between Walton, keeper of the local pool room, and the Clark Kane case.

I dropped into his place, ostensibly to buy cigars. Some young chaps were playing pool, but no one was near the cigar counter. As I was lighting a cigar I glanced at him. He didn't appear to be nervous.

"I understand you've been seeing the ghost of Clark Kane," I said.

Sam Walton jumped as if he had been kicked and his face went white.

"Who told you that?" he asked hoarsely, "I never told a soul what it was I been seein'!"

TO draw him out I decided that I would have better success by pretending that I was also a victim, and so I told him that I guessed it.

"'Tain't so," he growled.

"Well, I'm not telling everyone," I pretended to confide, "but I'm interested to learn what you saw because I have been seeing his ghost, too."

"You have?"

I nodded. Sam Walton turned eagerly to me.

"Was he in white with a mask and did he have big letters C. K. in black, in front of him?" he demanded.

"Exactly," I lied, delighted at my success.

Walton mopped his forehead and sighed.

"Gosh," he almost whimpered, "I've seen it three times and the third time it spoke to me. It said: 'You're next!'"

He said he had seen the apparition out of doors at night, each time. I condoled with him, asked him why he should be haunted. "You had no more to do with the case than I. Why should we be haunted?" I asked.

He hesitated, started to speak, then apparently changed his mind. I wondered if by any chance he did have some connection with the case.

Walton became such a wreck that everyone knew about it. He admitted that he was "seeing things" and for some weeks he scarcely drew a sober breath. Liquor could not help him, however. One morning they found him on the floor, half under a pool table.

He was dead, and on the pool table, written with cue chalk, was a message.

What was the death message written on Sam Walton's pool table? It is not likely that the specter of Briarwood is going to solve its own mystery in so simple a manner. But the mystery has to be solved and Bronson and Greg are going to do it. How are they going to do it? The answer to that is extremely interesting. Read the startling developments appearing in June GHOST STORIES, *on the news-stands April 23rd.*

"Ouija Never Lies"

(*Continued from page* 35)

but paused mid-way, staring at Beatrice. She had arisen and was moving slowly, like one in a dream, toward the old-fashioned piano in a corner of the room. Reaching it, she sat down upon the revolving stool and, lifting the lid, began to touch the yellow keys. They were off key a little, but their tone was fairly sweet.

"GIVE that charming fossil a dose of jazz, Beatrice," said Tom; but Beatrice did not appear to have heard him. For a few moments her fingers just sort of wandered over the keyboard, striking first one note, then another; then they drifted into a melody that none of us had ever heard before. Beatrice's weak, but sweet little voice, floated out over that still, dim-lit room in a cradle song:

The sandman's coming on silent feet,
He's creeping along down Slumber Street.
Stars are in the skies,
Baby, close your eyes,
Sleep, my baby, sleep.

I had a strange sensation of unreality. It could not be our gay, rather boisterous little gang in this quaint, dim room, with Beatrice, its leader, sitting at that old tinkly piano singing an unknown cradle song! What was the matter with us all? And—was I dreaming? What was the matter with Beatrice's hair—her golden bobbed hair? Why did it look so dark to me—like heavy dark braids wound about her head! Did anyone else see what I thought I saw? I closed my eyes, opened them and looked again. What a nervous nut I was! Beatrice's blonde mop was just the same as ever. She was singing:

Baby, go to rest
In your little nest,
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

As she ended, Bob stepped swiftly over and laid his hand on her shoulder. I saw him give her a shake which it appeared he was trying to give without our seeing it. She started and swung—or perhaps he swung her around on the piano stool, looking very much as one looks who is suddenly awakened from sleep. It was a moment more before she appeared to take in her surroundings.

"Why, what's the matter with you all?" she asked. "Margaret, you look frightened to death?"

"Oh, I'm not frightened," I declared, stopped in what I was about to say, by what I thought was a warning look from Bob. "We were just listening to your song. Where did you get it from, Beatrice?"

"Song? What song? Have I been singing?"

"Can it, Beatrice! What do you think you are doing—playing medium?" said Mabel, who, it was evident, had observed nothing very unusual about what she just had witnessed.

"Yes, she's just playing," said Bob quickly, before Beatrice could answer. But I knew that Bob knew that Beatrice had not been playing! I felt vaguely alarmed and was glad when Bob hastily changed the subject, suggesting that we all retire and get up early in the morning to play tennis on the new court Uncle Ned had had made on the lawn.

As we were going out, he managed to get me aside and whisper:

"Margaret, *you saw.* I did not want her frightened so I would not speak of it in there—and the rest didn't take it in, fortunately, or Mabel would have alarmed the house. Margaret, what is the matter with this darn house, anyway? There are no such things as ghosts—there can't be—or spirit manifestations. But we were not moving that board, Margaret, and Beatrice—Beatrice——" He paused, as if not willing to put his fear into words.

"Heaven knows what it is, Bob," I whispered back; "but it is *something* all right. I am almost afraid to go to bed. I'd like to wake Aunt Amelia and Uncle Ned and tell them—only, I know they'd laugh at me. It all would sound so silly if we told it."

"Margaret!" called Beatrice, and I had to go up the shadowy stairs to the room she and I were to occupy—Mabel Cheever was in the next one, and the boys had rooms across the hall. When we were both within, Beatrice closed and locked the door and turned to me with her usual directness.

"NOW, Margaret, tell me what frightened you and Bob so much," she said. "You told me I was singing, but I was not conscious of singing. I remember the board spelling 'Find Helen'—and Margaret, it seemed again, just as it did out by the lake, that there was something I ought to remember—something about someone named 'Helen.' I tried terribly hard to think—and I don't know anything that happened between that time and the time Bob shook me. What was it?"

I didn't want to tell her; but somehow people always did what Beatrice wanted them to do. I told her—keeping nothing back except the strange illusion I had had about her hair. That, I just couldn't repeat. It made me feel shivery to think of it!

She sat on the edge of the bed, her small feet swinging above the floor, and regarded me intently while I told her. Her face paled a little in the eerie light of the one kerosene lamp sitting in its quaint, stiff bracket on the side of the wall.

"What do you think it meant, Margaret? I must have been in a sort of trance or something."

"Beatrice, I don't know. This is a strange house, after all. I don't like it at all and I wish none of us had come. But we are here and I guess we'll have to make the best of it—tonight, anyway."

"Yes," she agreed. "Margaret, I feel—just queer, somehow—yet I am not exactly frightened. There is something that my mind keeps trying to remember—and it is something about someone named 'Helen.' I feel that I almost have it and then it is gone."

"Beatrice, please, dear, don't let's talk about it any more—let's try to forget it as much as we can and go to bed. I'll just scream if we talk about it any more."

She consented and we undressed and got into the great curtained bed. I suggested that we leave the lamp burning and she agreed. We whispered awhile, I trying to talk of anything and everything except the subject uppermost in my mind. The house was very silent. Outside in the distance a whip-poor-will cried fitfully—to me, eerily. A breeze came in through the window, causing the flame of the lamp to flicker and cast shadows upon the walls. Little chills ran up and down my spine, but I tried desperately to compose myself and go to sleep. After what seemed to me an eternity, I succeeded.

I AWOKE suddenly in a cold terror, caused by I knew not what. The breeze must have put out the lamp and at first everything seemed black. I felt depressed and I soon became conscious that Beatrice was not in the bed beside me.

Summoning all the courage I could, I raised myself to a sitting posture and looked around the shadowy room, fearful of what I might see. Then my hair seemed to rise on end. There a girlish figure was standing on the floor, facing me, directly in a shaft of moonlight. I was too numb with terror to move or utter a sound. It was my little blonde chum, Beatrice—but her hair had turned black!" I sat there like one paralyzed, watching her. She was speaking in a soft, singsong tone, and what she said was:

"Find Helen . . . Helen . . . Helen . . . find Helen!"

The sound of her human voice seemed to bring back to me the use of my own. I called her and, springing from the bed, managed, with trembling fingers, to strike a match and light the lamp. The combined sounds awoke her and she stared at me, blinking in the sudden light. My eyes, panic-filled, sought her head. Her hair was quite golden. Was I going mad!"

"What's the matter this time, Margaret?" she asked apprehensively.

Could I tell her what I had seen? I decided I couldn't.

"You are awfully nervous, Beatrice," I faltered. "You've been walking in your sleep."

"Oh!" She appeared surprised, but, whatever she thought of my explanation, she kept her own counsel. "I feel very tired," was all she said, and returned to bed. She was soon in a deep sleep.

But sleep certainly had forsaken my pillow. I lay tossing and turning restlessly through the remainder of that interminable night. When day finally broke, I stole up as silently as possible so as not to awaken Beatrice, attired myself in a sweater and sport skirt, and sought the open. I felt I simply could not bear that house any longer.

Some distance across the lawn, I detected a figure striding up and down and recognized Bob. I ran across the grass and joined him.

"The house must have got you too," I said.

"I haven't slept a wink," he replied. "I've just lain awake thinking about last night. What do you make of it, Margaret?"

"I don't know, Bob—that is—well, what I really do think would sound too utterly crazy. Something in his manner made me decide to tell him of my experience with Beatrice in our room—even about the hair. Bob had something about him—some quality—that inspired confidences.

"You must think I'm loony," I said when I had finished.

"I don't, because, strangely enough, I got the same impression last night—that Beatrice was not Beatrice, but someone else. And that's why it was, Margaret, her hair looked different—dark. I know what you think—that Beatrice must be a medium, though she never guessed it herself, and that something, or someone, in this infernal house—someone who had dark hair—was what they call 'in control' of her."

"Yes—that's it," I confessed.

"Let's go and talk to Uncle Moses," he said abruptly.

WE found the old man sitting in a cane rocking chair outside his little cabin door. He greeted us by rising and sweeping his worn felt hat nearly to the ground.

"Uncle Moses," said Bob, "we want you to tell us something about the Eden family."

"Yas suh, boss. Jes' what am it you-all wants to know?"

"First we want to know if anyone

named Helen ever lived here."

"No suh, boss. De only ladies what was in de Eden fambly was Marse Blake's wife, Miss Alice, an' his darter—she name Miss Louise. Dar warn't nebber no Miss Helen as ebbah I hearn on, suh."

Bob showed disappointment—or was it relief? He questioned further.

"And the two ladies you mention—did they——" He hesitated. "That is—what color was their hair?"

If the old man was surprised by this question, he gave no evidence of the fact. His portion it had been to serve the "white folks" and answer their questions.

"Miss Alice, her ha'r war' sort er reddish; but Miss Louise, hern war' black—black an' long an' shiny."

I started. Bob laid his hand on my arm. "They have been dead long?" he asked, I suppose, just for the sake of saying something, for of course he knew all the Edens had been dead for years—except Blake, who, as I have stated previously, had died somewhat over a year previous.

"Yas suh, boss. Miss Alice, she been daid nigh on forty years, an' Miss Louise—Marse Blake he done hear she daid ten year dis here very June."

"You say he 'heard it'; didn't she live here? I suppose she was married and had moved away."

"No suh, not as I knows on. Miss Louise, she run away to learn to sing. Marse Blake, he don't like it, an' he writes her a mean letter an' tells her not to come back no more—an' she nebbah did. Marse Blake, he mighty stubborn, an' Miss Louise, she take after him. She's gone twelve years an' Marse Blake receives notice of her burial. He's failin' after dat, boss, an' nebbah himself no mo' 'til de day he die. Boss, he was sorry he wrote her as he did, but he's gone now an' de good Lord forgives him for it. De good Lord, he make eberything right, boss, in de end, so he do."

"Uncle Moses, did you ever see a—a ghost?" I interrogated.

"A ghos'? Lordy, yas-um, young Missy, Ghos'es—dey is mighty plentiful. 'Tain't eberybody what kin see 'um, wid dey eyes; but dey is aroun' heeps ob times—yas-um, dey be fer sho'."

A gong sounded from the house.

"Breakfus' ready foh you-all. Lordy, suh, how natch'al dat ole gong do soun'!" He shook his grizzled head mournfully.

Bob thanked him for the information he had given us and presented him with a dollar bill for which he was profuse in his thanks, and we went, almost silently, across the grass to the house, each knowing just about what the other was thinking.

AT breakfast Beatrice appeared gay enough and no mention was made of the night before. Mabel started to bring up the subject, but Bob stopped her with a glance, which, though it evidently puzzled her, she obeyed.

After breakfast, while the rest were making ready to play tennis, Bob called me aside and whispered:

"Margaret, let's slip away and investigate the garret; somehow, I've a sort of hunch that there may be some kind of a clue up there."

"It's awfully dark and spooky up there, Bob."

"No, it won't be. We'll open the windows."

Reluctantly I followed him up the narrow, dark garret stairs.

"Gee, it's like a pocket up here sure enough!" he ejaculated, when we stood inside the long, low-ceilinged room. With considerable difficulty, caused by the vines having grown over them, he got the shutters open. A conglomeration of all sorts of ancient objects stood about, covered with cobwebs and dust: an old spinning wheel; some broken chairs; boxes of dusty books; a Confederate Army uniform hung upon a rusty nail in the wall; a child's wooden rocking-horse with the paint worn off; some trunks of ancient make.

I FELT most uncomfortable, as well as nervous. "I—I hate this, Bob," I declared. "It seems almost like prying, to search through these things that belonged to dead people. I wish you wouldn't."

As I spoke, a breeze, coming in through the window near me, lifted a large sheet of paper lying with a pile of others similar, upon one of the broken chairs, and dropped it directly at my feet. Bob stooped and picked the piece of paper up—and his face went white underneath its healthy coat of tan!

"Look, Margaret!" he cried in a tone that trembled.

I looked. The room seemed to whirl about me and I clutched at him for support. I was about as near fainting as I ever had been in my healthy young life.

Bob was holding before my eyes a sheet of manuscript music with words written into it in a small, round, girlish hand. It was what appeared to be an original composition of the cradle song Beatrice had sung the night before. At the bottom of the page a name was written in the same handwriting as the words of the song—and the name was "Louise Lee Eden."

"I'm not dreaming, am I, Bob?—for God's sake, pinch me!"

"No, you are awake, Margaret, and some most unusual things are happening in this house I'll say!"

"Bob, I'm going down! I can't stay here another minute—and I'm going to tell Uncle Ned, too. I think he ought to know—and take us all back to town at once!"

"All right, we'll go down and tell him. Get him alone, though—don't frighten Mrs. Corlies."

We went down the garret stairs with far more haste than we had climbed up, and sought Uncle Ned. He was looking over the books in the library and, fortunately, was alone. Somewhat incoherently we managed to tell him the whole incredible series of events. He listened, at first with amusement, later with astonishment, and finally sat speechless, holding the sheet of music in his hand.

"There must be some explanation," he said at length. "Good heavens! To own a belief in ghosts is to own one's self a lunatic! Don't let Amelia know of this."

"What is it, Ned?" spoke Aunt Amelia's voice from the doorway. "Tell me at once. If you don't want me to know, I am pretty certain it is something I should know. Tell me this instant!" and she bristled as much as it was possible for gentle Aunt Amelia to bristle.

"I know, Mother." Beatrice entered the

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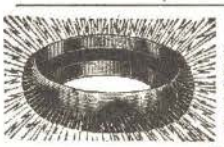

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room behind her, followed by the others who had found it too hot to play tennis. "Bob and Margaret are telling Dad about last night."

"And this morning!" I added, and waved the sheet of music before her eyes. She stared at it incredulously, took it in her hand and studied it intently, while we once more went over the story for Aunt Amelia's benefit, leaving out the part about the hair. I just couldn't tell that with Tom and Mabel gaping at me, and Bob and Uncle Ned knew intuitively how I felt, and made no mention of it.

Beatrice had dropped into a chair and sat staring into space as if trying desperately to remember something that persistently eluded her. Suddenly she sprang up. "I'm going to play it!" she cried. "I'm going to play it over and over until I remember! It reminds me of something—or someone—and I've just got to remember!"

WE all followed her into the parlor and sat about on the stiff seats. Aunt Amelia had said very little. She appeared to be thinking deeply. Beatrice, with the music before her, played the air over and began to sing it softly.

The sandman's coming on silent feet,
He's creeping along down Slumber Street,
Stars are in the skies,
Baby, close your eyes,
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

Aunt Amelia gave a little cry. "I remember!" she exclaimed. "I thought it was familiar somehow. It was at Hazelhurst, Ned—that little resort we went to the summer Beatrice was three years old—don't you remember it?—and the young woman there with the lovely voice who used to pet Beatrice so much? I can't think of her name, but she had a baby girl about Beatrice's age and she used to sit by the lake in the evening, just before the children's bedtime, and sing that cradle song to them. It was absorbed in Beatrice's subconscious mind in some manner and she has remembered it after all these years. How remarkable!"

Beatrice whirled around on the piano stool, her whole face alight.

"Helen!" she cried, "Helen Fay!—little Helen Fay and her mother with the long, long black hair! 'Find Helen—find Helen Fay!'"

"I have the name now," said Aunt Amelia. "It was 'Ferris.' Beatrice could not say 'Ferris' so she called the little girl 'Helen Fay.'"

"You say the young woman had a good voice, Mrs. Corlies?" asked Bob in a peculiar tone. I caught my breath as a flash of realization leaped into my mind.

"Yes, her voice was most unusual. Why?"

"Blake Eden's daughter, Louise, ran away from this house twenty-two years ago to study singing." And Bob proceeded to recount what we had learned from Uncle Moses. When he had finished there was a hush upon the room. Even Tom and Mabel were awed.

AT last Uncle Ned cleared his throat and spoke—rather stubbornly.

"I refuse to believe—what the rest of you evidently believe—that a spirit had anything to do with this—or that there really is anything to it at all, except a series of remarkable coincidences. Surely, if Louise Eden was Mrs. Ferris and left a daughter, Doctor Hayes would have taken steps to locate the girl. Certainly he had no particular desire to own this place."

"Doctor Hayes is only a distant cousin," said Beatrice. "He probably did not even know the Edens intimately. Dad, there is just one thing to do—find Helen Fay and ask her who her mother was. Oh, Dad, you must!"

"Let's ask Ouija where she is," said Mabel.

"No, there is to be no more of that nonsense," declared Uncle Ned emphatically. "If my daughter really possesses any psychic power, I don't want it stimulated by usage. It won't do her nerves any good—and I haven't any particular desire to have spirits become confidential anywhere close around me."

Beatrice's small, determined figure stood before him. "I shall use my power, Dad, unless you start at once to have Helen Fay traced. Dad, I know, I just know, somehow, that she is the real owner of this place, and that the *presence* of her mother was in this house last night—begging me to remember Helen and find her. You can call it anything you like, Dad, but I *know*."

Uncle Ned gave her a long look.

"All right, Beatrice, I'll have her traced. But I shall not advise Hayes of any of this until she is found and positively identified as Blake Eden's granddaughter. He would call me a fool."

"Uncle Ned, can't we go back to town tonight?" I inquired.

"We needn't, Margaret," said Beatrice. "I don't think there will be any more 'coincidences.' I am not afraid—and I want to wait right here for Helen Fay."

Uncle Ned looked at Aunt Amelia; she nodded her head.

"I think we may as well stay on, Ned," she said. "There are 'strange things in heaven and earth' and I believe we have witnessed one of them. But, like Beatrice, I think the house will be peaceful now—the spirit has accomplished its mission and can rest content. Anyway, we shall await developments."

Thus it was decided—to my discomfiture. But I needn't have feared. A more peaceful place could scarcely have been found than Eden House the rest of that summer.

Uncle Ned advertised for information concerning "Helen Ferris, whose mother was an Eden." Beatrice saw to that—abetted by Aunt Amelia.

Six weeks later came a remarkable letter from Doctor Hayes, which read as follows:

Dear Ned:

Helen Eden Ferris has been in training as a nurse at my hospital for two years. I had no idea who she really was, nor did she have any idea that she was my kinswoman. Her mother died very suddenly without telling her that she was Blake Eden's granddaughter, and Ferris, her father, being already dead some years, there was no one to tell her. I suppose Louise never informed her father that she was married and had a child, as he must have died in ignorance of the fact, or he would have made a will in the girl's favor so that there would be no doubt that she would be traced and the property given to her.

I happened, by chance, to see your personal and was much puzzled by it. As I had a Miss Ferris in my employ, I called her into my office and showed her the advertisement. She established her identity beyond all reasonable doubt and I am bringing her to Eden House immediately, and shall very gladly turn it over to her. But how on earth, Ned, did you learn of her existence?

Sincerely yours,
ARTHUR E. HAYES.

IT was on a fragrant July night, when the rambler roses on the lattice were looking their loveliest, that Helen Ferris came home. She was just the prettiest thing—a slender, dark-eyed girl with very lustrous black hair, bobbed of course, for Helen was quite a normal girl and very modern. Beatrice met her at the steps with open arms.

"Helen Fay!" she cried. "Don't you remember 'Bet'?—little 'Bet,' who used to play with you when we were both babies?"

Helen stared at her—mentally going back over the long years.

"'Bet!'" she echoed. "A little girl with very yellow hair—down by the water. I remember you. How wonderful and how lovely!"

After dinner we all gathered in the parlor and told Doctor Hayes and Helen the whole unbelievable story. They listened, Helen with a tender awe in her lovely eyes, and the Doctor with an expression of speculative interest.

"Well, man, what do you think of the phenomenon?" asked Uncle Ned, when the narrative was completed.

Doctor Hayes lit a cigarette and regarded it contemplatively.

"It is most interesting and, as you say, phenomenal," he remarked at last. "But, Ned, you cannot expect a practical scientific man of my kind to accept the theory of the supernatural. My opinion is that it was only a series of exceedingly remarkable, but really quite natural, coincidences. In the beginning your daughter was impressed with the appearance of the lake, because it awakened in her subconscious mind her summer at that other lake when she was a small child. She sought to recall something that eluded her.

"Then, the ancient atmosphere of the house, young Monmouth's remarks about ghosts, the timely or, if you like, untimely breaking of the clock pendulum, produced nervousness which was increased by the play with the Ouija board." He smiled a little at mention of this much defamed but familiar medium of spirit research. "Doubtless that caused what followed. Miss Corlies' subconscious mind, being still on the problem of some association with a lake, connected up the name of the child she had once played with beside a lake. The child's name was 'Helen.' The word 'find' was the product of her idea to seek—to remember—not to seek Helen, but to recall some forgotten incident of her childhood.

"Now then, of course, unconsciously, her fingers moved the board. It requires but a very slight pressure to move one. Her brief trance, if we may call it such, was due to some psychological or nervous

reaction—as was also her sleep-walking during the night. The incident in the garret when these two young people discovered the music sheet was purely accidental. A remarkable series of coincidences, I will own, Ned—but not supernatural!"

"But, Doctor Hayes," I ventured, "what about Beatrice's hair? Why did it twice appear dark to me?—and once to Bob also?"

"That, my dear young lady," he responded amusedly, "did not happen. You only imagined it—pardon me, you, of course, *thought* you saw it. Just why you imagined it the first time I cannot say—perhaps in the shadow of the room it really appeared dark. In the bedroom you thought you saw it because you were expecting to see it. And when you mentioned it to young Mr. Van Scoy, the suggestion caused him to imagine that he, also, had observed it. Natural laws govern all things, Miss Delaney. I cannot think otherwise."

Well, that's the story. My pretty caller leaned back in her chair and regarded me, a question in her eyes. "What do you think of it, Ghost Lady? Do you agree with the practical doctor and his great majority, that it was only a series of phenomenal coincidences? Or, can you believe with the small minority not quite so practical, that mother-love reached from the grave, striving to bring to its object, her birthright?"

"I can only say," I replied with a smile—and perhaps there was a twinkle in my eye, "Ouija never lies."

"Go Find My Kidnapped Son!"

(*Continued from page* 48)

Far faster than the law allows I whirled down that highway, not slowing until I had reached the next city. Without apparent reason, but with straight and definite route, I traversed perhaps half the width of the city, and turned my car into the driveway of a doctor's yard, stopping it close beside closed garage doors.

Karmahahti and I stepped out, and Burton followed behind us as we went to the rear door of the house. Karmahahti opened the door without knocking, walked in silently and unmolested, because there was no one to be seen, turned into a narrow passageway and ascended a staircase.

WE must have been a strange trio, Karmahahti with his Indian-brown face and set, wide eyes, then myself, probably with eyes as set and queer, and last my husband, amazement, incredulousness, suspicion upon his countenance.

That is what a man and woman saw, at any rate, as we turned into a bedroom on the second floor. They whirled sharply on us, a tall man and a frightened looking woman. But we paid no attention to them. Our gaze had flashed instantly to the bed where a form lay motionless under the white clothes. Karmahahti pushed aside the woman roughly and stepped to the bed. Only then did he regain everyday normalcy. I was at the bedside as quickly as he, and Burton but a step after that.

Our little boy lay there, head bandaged, eyes closed, but, thank God, still breathing. I sank down on my knees beside the bed. Karmahahti shook himself, and strode back and forth across the floor in front of the still amazed young man. Halting at the end of the room, he whirled quickly and pointed his finger accusingly at the doctor.

"You!" said Karmahahti to the doctor, still in a voice that was low, but with a snarling menace that seemed unlike the mildly apologetic man I had known. "You! Explain this if you want to keep yourself out of jail, possibly out of the electric chair!"

"I will," the man said quickly, quaking with evident fear." I hit the tot. I swear to God I could not have helped it, for he darted out in front of me. I hit him, I stopped. He lay there, crushed, hurt, unconscious. I lost my nerve, lost my head, then. No one was about, evidently no one had seen. I caught him up quickly, put him on the floor in the back of the car and speeded for home as fast as I could go, making the twelve miles in far less time than I ever had before. Once here, my wife helped me carry him upstairs, and I have nursed him night and day since. My practice is small enough, but I have neglected what there is of it entirely for this chap. My wife gave out that I was out of town. Day and night, one or the other of us has been by his side. Nights I have slept on the couch there.

"What I have suffered no one knows! I did not know who he was. I was not brave enough to do anything about it at first, and after that I dared do nothing but tend the child lest he should die."

"Didn't you see the papers, man?" asked Burton at this point. "They have been filled with accounts about him, his picture and all."

"No, we have not had a paper since we have taken care of this boy," the doctor replied. "We have devoted our time entirely to the sick room, and have been wholly out of touch with the world outside of it."

"Will he live?" I asked. That was all that mattered to me, now that I had found my boy. I cuddled a thin little hand to my cheek.

The doctor nodded. "I think now that he will. It has been a mighty close shave. I hardly thought he would pull through. But since morning there has been a slight improvement, and I believe the crisis will come tonight when he will regain consciousness."

I sobbed aloud in my relief.

Karmahahti again pointed a finger at the doctor. "The child has been found. What about yourself now?"

The man was white and haggard, but he grew whiter still. Yet he lifted his head courageously now.

"I am ready to take my medicine. While I have fought the battle with death for this child's life I have also fought the battle with my own cowardice. I have won the latter. God grant the former has been won as well. But I cannot leave here until the child has regained consciousness and I know he is in capable medical hands."

HERE his wife spoke for the first time, in tired tones of let-down emotion.

"No one could have cared for the boy better than husband has. And no one knows better than I what a hell he has lived through. You see—we—lost a boy of our own about three months ago. Not so old as this one, just a small child, but some day he would have grown—if he—had lived."

The room was quiet, pregnant with emotion. Burton cleared his throat.

"We will not press the charge against you, Doctor," he said. "Of course there will be action against you, for it is known to the police, but if you will report at once by telephone, I'll stand back of you, and it may be possible to make things easier for you."

In his reaction the doctor wept there on his knees beside my crushed and panting child. His wife insisted that I stay there at their house until possible to move Junior. Junior rallied that night, as predicted by the physician, and after weeks of slow and painful bondage to the bed, entered a gradual convalescence. It was not until then that I saw Karmahahti again for a few minutes when he stopped to inquire for the boy.

"Karmahahti," I said eagerly, and after I had thanked him from the bottom of my heart for his assistance, for this man would not touch money in connection with his magical gift of second sight. "I wish you would tell me why you could not trace Junior from the house but had to follow his trail out of school."

Karmahahti smiled indulgently. "I should think you would know that," he said. "I tried at first, of course, to get into touch with the mind of the boy. If he had been dead there would have been certain vibratory sensations to indicate that. So I knew he must be alive. Yet I could get no answering spark.

"Then I started from the school, felt the impulse of haste that had filled the child, but as I was about to dart across that sidestreet as he had done, there came such horror, such stabbing pain, such oblivion of sensation! That was followed by a rush of strong emotion which I know now, came not from the child, who was unconscious at that point of my repetition of the near-tragedy, but from the man himself who had run down this innocent, heedless tot. It made me wish to escape, rush off, away from that awful scene. I was filled with that feeling almost to the exclusion of anything else. It led us to the child, you see, for it was the sudden fear and escape of the doctor at his accident, an altogether human but regrettable desire to escape consequences."

The Soul Destroyers

(*Continued from page 71*)

As he studied them, the dogs fell to sniffing of them, whining.

At a point where the earth was quite loose from the scratching of chickens, owned by the former tenant, there was an impression that was quite clear. Keith bent over it solemnly, taking out a pocket rule.

He measured the length of the impression, and found that it was a fraction over fourteen inches long!

What sort of person had made them? He noticed that there was not the slightest indication of a dividing mark between the heel and the pointed toe, though the depression indicated a slight arch, and other contours. At its widest point, the mark only measured three and seven-eighths inches.

"Human being or devil?" Keith muttered ironically.

He studied the point, which seemed to curve abruptly upward.

"A Turkish slipper. Hm!"

HE went to one of the kennels, securing a long leash, and snapped it on the collar of one of the hounds. The dog sniffed one of the impressions with an eager impatience, leading the detective completely around to the front of the house, and up the steps to the door. Keith studied the reactions of the animal with practised concentration. Then down again, and around the other side to the point outside the library window where he had seen the black apparition. From here the animal led him behind the kennels to the back fence. Keith swung over it, the dog following in a flying leap, and they picked their way through a tall mass of hollyhocks to the alley that ran directly behind. The scent persisted about fifty yards up the alley, and apparently ceased.

Keith's sharp eyes discerned the faint impressions of large balloon tires. Here the red sedan had probably stopped to discharge the mysterious visitor. Screened by the hollyhocks, and the leafy boughs of the old poplars, the prowler had made his way to the fence, leaping over it *without attracting the attention of the dogs!*

But the car had been seen in the street in front of the house. All the footprints led away from the back fence; there must be a scented trail out the front way.

He found this to be the case. Starting from the library window again, the dog led him out the front gate, and to a point half-way down the block. Here the animal sniffed about frantically, finally raising his muzzle to indulge in a howl of disappointment.

As he entered the gate he saw his young sister returning, carrying a shopping-bag, and paused while she drew up.

"What in the world are you doing, Harry?"

He laughed.

"Trailing a black ghost, Mary."

As they entered the yard he told her briefly of the strange visitation, and of the black box, of the red sedan, and O'Hara's pursuit.

"Then——" she exclaimed, paling—"Jack jumped on the back of the car, and went with them?"

"Yes, it must have been Jack. He probably heard my shot as he was returning through the alley across the street. He'd gone on an errand. I suppose he saw the hooded prowler running from the place, and saw the red car pick him up. Jack probably figured that I could take care of myself, and saw an opportunity for trailing them to their lair. I hope he uses discretion; he's a little hot-headed over the death of his brothers."

She shuddered, following him to the library window.

"Some day," she exclaimed, "I'm going to marry Jack and take him away from this life."

He laughed, unfastening the leash, the dog bounding away to resume sniffing at the footprints.

"No you'll not—take him away, I mean. You know full well that you are as fond of thrills and excitement as he is. Look."

He pointed up to the jagged panel in the French window.

"I aimed for those green eyes," he said, "and if my aim was true, and it usually is, our impudent visitor must have been seven feet tall."

She nodded, her blue eyes flashing.

"Then you didn't get to read Professor Travers' statement yet?"

"No. I had just started to, when I saw the face at the window."

"And that black box?"

"I haven't opened it yet."

THEY entered the house, and paused at the library table, looking at the little black box. Keith reached out to pick it up, but Mary grasped his wrist.

"Wait, Harry! what if there is some sort of explosive in it?"

He shook his head.

"I hardly think so—not in a paper box. In fact, I think I know exactly what is inside."

He took it up in his fingers, shaking it, and they heard something rattling inside it. Keith lifted the cover.

"A ring!" Mary exclaimed.

Keith smiled, turning the box and dropping the red enameled ring on the table. She reached out to pick it up, but he stopped her, his face suddenly grave.

"No—don't touch it, Mary."

"It's the same sort of ring that has been found on those men who committed suicide, isn't it?"

"Yes."

He glanced at her gravely.

"I'm beginning to get a glimmer of intelligence out of all this," he exclaimed. "The ring is a present from Tracy, of course. What might have happened if I hadn't seen my black-robed visitor, I can't say. But—Mary, what does a person naturally do when they receive a ring?"

She reflected a moment.

"Why—they try it on."

Their eyes met, and the color left her face.

"Even this," she exclaimed, "knowing where it comes from, too, Harry. I believe it would have been a natural impulse; just—well, one of those things people do without thinking about it. Then—you think that if I had——?"

He shrugged non-commitally.

"I don't know." His lips tightened grimly. "The fact remains that in dealing with Ronald Tracy we have a criminal who is well versed in science and those mysterious practices that come under the head of necromancy. Travers might have some interesting comments on the subject of the ring, among other things. We'd better look over his report——"

The telephone rang, and Keith answered it.

"Jack!" he exclaimed, his features relaxing. His sister gave a cry of joy and ran toward him, putting her ear next to the receiver.

"I've got their place spotted, Harry," they heard O'Hara say. "Just dumb luck. Is everything all right there?"

Keith told him everything was.

"There have been a few interesting developments. We'll go over them when you get here."

"Right. Say, I had a deuce of a time riding on a tire rack for two miles; feel like a pretzel. But they had all the shades down in the car, and didn't dream that I was riding behind them. I'll hop into a taxi, and tell you all about it."

Mary leaned toward the transmitter.

"Hurry home, dear; we're going to have fried chicken for supper!"

A FEW minutes later Keith entered his study, examining the red ring he held between his thumb and forefinger through a magnifying glass. He gave an exclamation of astonishment. On the inside of the ring was a tiny hole, hardly big enough to notice with the naked eye. He opened a drawer in the desk, taking out a microscope and a pair of tweezers. Placing the ring on the stage of the instrument, he studied it intently through the high-powered glass. With a chuckle of satisfaction, he lit a match, holding the ring firmly with the pincers, and applying the flame to the surface, watching intently the small orifice through the microscope.

There was a sudden faint click, and he saw a sharp needle-like point protrude through the tiny hole!

"Just as I thought!" he muttered. "The heat of the body releases a spring, and a poisoned needle pierces the skin!"

For several minutes he speculated on the nature of this poison. How could any concoction drive a person to suicide? And if so, how had these men met their deaths without arousing the attention of others? After reflecting upon this enigma for a while, he put the ring aside, and went to the window. The bloodhounds were walking about, sniffing the foot-prints.

Returning to his desk, he sat down and took up Travers' notes. It read as follows:

THIS is an experience of the Fifth Dimension; in short, that realm of the unseen world that we designate as cosmic consciousness. Much of this account will probably mystify, but I have tried to make a true report of the terrible and astound-

ing experiences I went through before that human devil, Ronald Tracy, permitted me to walk out once again into the three dimensional world.

Secure in the knowledge that Tracy and his two confederates were behind the bars, and would be taken to the penitentiary the next day, Miss Grover and I had suddenly decided to get married. I called a taxi, and when we left the hotel I mentioned to the clerk that I might be gone for several days.

Frankly, neither of us had any definite plans, though we both had the mischievous notion of getting married and leaving the city without telling Mrs. Grover or any of our relatives and friends. I had a vague notion of going several places after the ceremony, among them Miami.

We motored to Emsworth, obtaining the license. Evelyn and I were both considerably excited, of course, and we never dreamed that we had been followed. I was directed to a minister by the clerk, and we got in the taxi again. We had only gone a short distance when the car stopped, and thinking that we had reached the church, I opened the door to step out. To my surprise I found myself looking into the muzzle of a revolver, held in the hand of a black-hooded man. Surrounding us were several other men similarly masked, all with long black robes.

Resistance was useless. They bound and gagged poor Evelyn. Then they did likewise with me, and also the driver of the taxi, and bags were pulled over our heads.

Then we were driven somewhere in another car. I believe that we were on the move for about an hour, though I can't be sure on this point. Naturally, it seemed like an eternity. None of the men spoke; the only sound was that made by the car —a closed one, I believe.

At length the car stopped, and we were dragged out. I heard four short raps, followed after a slight pause with a fifth, and heard the creaking of a door. We were hustled through it, and down some long steps. Continuing along a passageway for about a hundred feet, we came to another door. At any rate, I heard a sliding sound, and as it ceased, we advanced into another passage or hallway. I am inclined to think it the former, for the floor seemed to be of earth. We turned to the right—of that much I am sure—and continued on. Then we turned to the left, and seemed to be going around a long curve that sloped up in places and down in others. There was an unmistakable odor of earth, and other odors I cannot define.

WE came to another sliding door, halted, and then were pushed on. So far there had not been a single word exchanged between any of our captors. But after going a short distance I heard the sound of a sort of chant. The ground began to slope downward, and the smell of a heavy incense came to me. We halted again, and as we waited, the noise of a door raising and an increasing volume of sound from many voices came to me.

Our captors impelled us forward. I felt waves of heat of some kind through my hood. The smell of smoke and incense was almost overpowering. The chanting ceased abruptly with a rising wail, and we stopped. We could only wait, and hope.

For several moments we stood there while commands were given in a high, feminine voice, in some foreign tongue that sounded like Hindustani, with which I am only slightly familiar. But it was all unintelligible, with the exception of the name *Siva*—this being the name of the deity of destruction and reproduction, according to Hindu conceptions. I well knew, from past experiences with Tracy, that his cult recognized only the element of destruction, and that to them, Tracy himself personified *Siva* in their minds.

Also, from past experience, and judging from the heat radiations, the smell of the smoke and incense, and the chanting, I knew that we were in the worship place of the cult. I did not need the use of my vision to know that there was the customary dais, surrounding it a circle of red fire, with black-robed, hooded worshippers kneeling about it.

It was difficult to reconcile my mind to the fact that a woman was presiding, knowing the inferiority of the feminine sex in the eyes of the Orient, and particularly India. But it was a woman, as I learned later.

After a few words had been exchanged, the chanting started again, weird and unearthly, and we were dragged away. There were more doors and passages, and at length I was thrown into a cell of some sort, and I heard the foot-falls of my captors as they retreated.

God! in what agony of spirit I lay there, bound and gagged! I knew that I was alone—that Evelyn had been taken elsewhere. But I must dispense with the desperate anguish and fear that gripped me, and set down only such facts as may throw light upon the most diabolical practices the world has ever known. This even though, as I write these lines, I know that my Evelyn is in the clutches of that unspeakable monster. God give me back my strength!

I believe I lay there for fourteen hours or more. At length I heard footsteps approaching, and the hood was taken from my head. I saw two black-robed figures standing over me. One was holding a torch and a tray of food. The other removed my gag, and untied my wrists. A mad impulse to struggle with them gripped me, but my legs were bound, and the futility of attacking them was too evident.

"Food and drink," the hooded devil who had removed some of my bonds said briefly. I asked them what they had done with Evelyn, but they did not answer, placing the tray on the ground, and leaving me in black darkness.

I think I was in that terrible dungeon for about three days. Then I saw the passage lighten, and a single hooded figure advanced, bearing a torch. At first I thought that my fevered eyes caught a distorted impression; the figure seemed gigantic. But as he stuck the point of the torch handle in the ground and came toward me, I realized that my visitor was all of seven feet tall.

Without replying to my question, the giant proceeded to blindfold me and bind my wrists behind my back, rolling me over as though I were a child. Then he cut the rope on my ankles, and dragged me to my feet. I could hardly stand, but the hooded giant grasped me by the coat

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collar and taking up the torch, impelled me forward.

Through long passages and creaking door-ways we went, the chant of the devil worshippers growing gradually more audible, until finally I knew that we stood in the worship place of the cult. I could feel the heat of the red fire, and the unearthly, weird volume of sound that came from the throats of the worshippers.

Abruptly it ceased, and I heard a short command given in a deep, vibrant voice. The blood literally froze in my veins, and I think I would have swooned from terror and weakness if my guard hadn't caught me. It was the voice of Ronald Tracy! God knows I shall never forget it.

"Welcome, Professor Travers," the fiend said; "it is indeed a pleasure to receive you again."

I shall not recount the emotions and thoughts that swept over me. I had thought Tracy safe behind the walls of the penitentiary.

"Come, Professor," he said with his characteristic devilish irony; "you are silent. Perhaps afraid?"

I managed to ask what he had done with Evelyn.

"Fool!" he answered; "love is unbecoming in one of your intellectual attainments. *Brahma* is true; the world is false. The soul is *Brahma* and is nothing else."

HE stood watching me for a moment, seized and dragged away. Once again a chant arose, a dolorous, mystic invocation to *Siva*. To what doom was I being taken? It mattered little; Evelyn and I would never meet again in this world. I prayed for deliverance, for death.

Death? Rather that than the things I witnessed in the next hour!

My custodian pushed me along a narrow passage, and down a steep flight of stairs. As we paused at the bottom I heard a sound like a heavy door rising, and then I was pushed forward and thrust into a chair. My legs were bound again, and a rope passed from my ankles under the chair to my wrists. Then the blindfold was removed.

I was in a room something like the one Tracy had used as a work-shop and laboratory under the old colonial manse of the Grovers, only this one was fully twenty feet square. In it were a varied assortment of chemical bottles, retorts, a bunsen burner, test-tubes, and so forth, ranged on a wide bench along one wall. In the middle of the room was a large table of peculiar construction, built something like an operating table, but sloping. At one end—the upper—was a sort of hood, suspended from an adjustable bracket, various metal and rubber tubes connecting it with an apparatus near it. Beside the table was a long stand, upon which was a box, covered with black velvet, as were the walls of the room. From the ceiling hung a canopy of white stars in a field of blue, an iron candelabrum projecting through the center, its seven yellow candles casting a weird, flickering light over the place.

My captor stood with arms folded as a massive door slowly descended, blocking the entrance through which we had come. Then I saw the black drapes move at one end of the room, and a tall, thin figure in a red silk robe and hood entered noiselessly. Through the two openings in the hood I saw the glittering black eyes of Ronald Tracy.

HE stood watching me for a moment, and then gave an order to the giant by my side. For the first time my attendant spoke—in a thin, feminine voice. It was the voice of the woman I had heard when I had first been taken to the Devil Room. The giantess turned toward me, and I saw that her eyes were of a peculiar shade of green, resembling jade. My wrists were unbound, and then the woman disappeared behind the drapes, returning with a bottle of champagne and glasses.

"It is not poisoned," Tracy said mockingly, as I hesitated to take the glass of sparkling liquid the hooded woman held out to me; "merely champagne."

I took the glass.

"If it is," I retorted, "I need it. If poison, so much the better."

The woman departed, and Tracy removed his hood, a mocking smile upon his thin, cruel lips. I stared in a fascinated horror at the satanic features of the man; the smooth, black hair, combed sleekly back from the bulging forehead; the sharp, glittering black eyes; the thin, ghastly yellow cheeks. . . .

He raised his glass.

"Let us drink, my dear Travers," he said, "to the end of all matter."

How I loathed, hated, feared the human devil! But my fear was so abject and hopeless that an insolence born of despair made me say:

"I drink to the hour when justice brings about *your* end."

He only grinned, and I closed my eyes to shut out the sight of his evil face, and drank the champagne. The sparkling liquor stimulated my frayed nerves. I looked up to see Tracy still smiling sardonically. He raised his glass, draining it, and reached for the bottle, stepping forward.

"You'd better have another, my dear Professor," he smiled; "you hardly look fit."

"After lying for untold hours in a dark hole, with only bread and water? No, I suppose not."

He poured my glass full again, shrugging.

"I am sorry, Travers, but I had been detained."

He chuckled, re-filling his own glass.

"But I shall try and make amends. The human machine must have nourishment. For supper, you shall have the best of food."

He raised his glass, and we both drank—I for strength.

"And now," he said, taking my glass, "I shall show you some very interesting things." He rubbed his attenuated hands together, his yellow teeth flashing in a hideous grin, as he slowly lifted the velvet cover from the long box on the stand.

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A wonderful little instrument producing optical illusions both surprising and startling. With it you can see what is apparently the bones of your fingers, the lead in a lead pencil, the interior opening in a pipe stem, and many other similar illusions. A mystery that no one has been able to satisfactorily explain. Price **10c, 3 for 25c, 1 dozen 75c. Johnson Smith & Co.**

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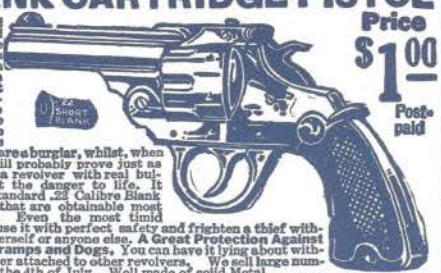
Price $1.00 Postpaid



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Place a very small amount of this powder on the back of your hand and blow it into the air, and everyone in the room or car will begin to sneeze without knowing the reason why. It is most amusing to hear their remarks, as they never suspect the real source, but think they have caught it one from the other. Between the laughing and sneezing you yourself will be having the time of your life. **For parties, political meetings, car rides,** or any place at all where there is a gathering of people, it is the **greatest joke out Price 10c or 3 for 25c Shipped by Express Only.**

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a little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it.

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This is another good practical joke; the intense discomfiture of your victims to everyone but themselves is thoroughly enjoyable. All that is necessary to star the ball rolling is to deposit a little of the powder on a person's hand and the powder can be relied upon to do the rest. The result is a vigorous scratch, then some more scratch, and still some more.

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A REAL STARTLER. This is the most popular of all squirt tricks. The flower in your coat looks so fresh and sweet that everyone is tempted to inhale the delightful perfume. Then is the moment to press the bulb. Geewhillikens! Don't they jump? There is a very long rubber tube that easily reaches to the pocket of your coat or trousers, and the bulb is large enough to make a dozen shots with one loading. **PRICE 25c each, or 3 for 65c postpaid.**

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These Comic Celluloid Buttons provide subjects for pleasant jokes and amusing conversation and thus smooth the way to a more familiar acquaintance and cordial friendship. There are seventy different titles altogether, all very wittily worded and quite unobjectionable. Wear one and see the effect. All **four** Buttons illustrated above will be sent postpaid to any address for **ONLY 20c** or a **dozen,** all different, for **45c.**

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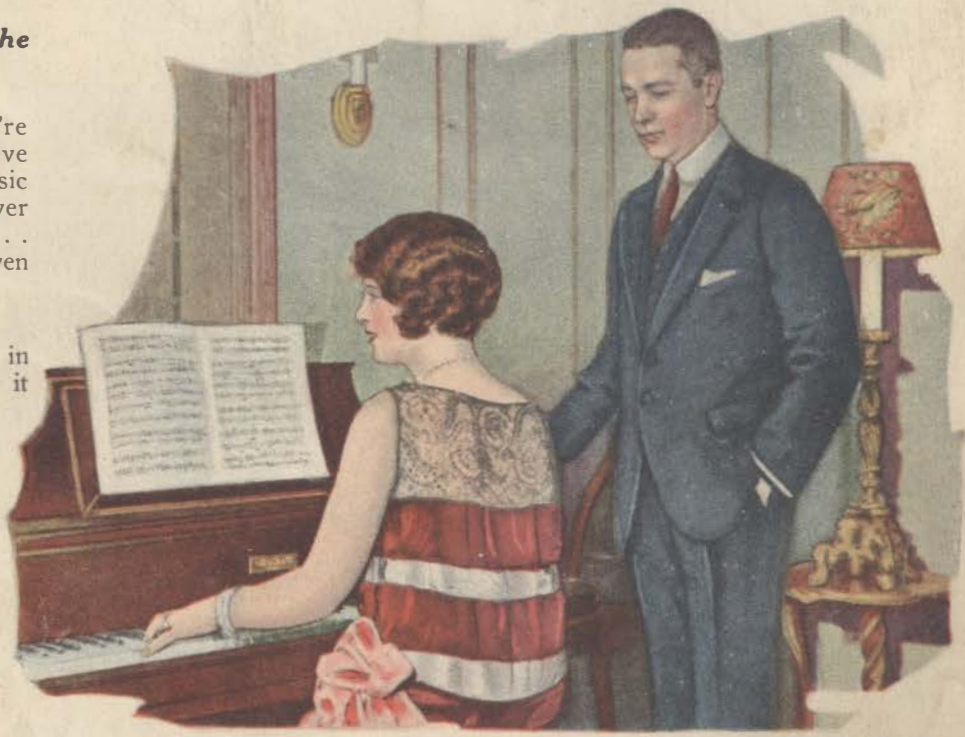
— *Until I Found It Was Easy As A-B-C*

Then I Gave My Husband the Surprise of His Life



"DON'T be silly, Mary. You're perfectly foolish to believe you can learn to play music by that method. You can never learn to play the piano that way . . . it's crazy! You are silly to even think about it."

"But, Jack, it's . . ."

"Mary, how *can* you believe in that crazy music course. Why it claims to teach music in half the usual time and *without a teacher*. It's impossible!"

That is how my husband felt when I showed him an ad telling about a new way to learn music. He just laughed. His unbelieving laughter made me wonder. I began to feel doubtful. Perhaps I had been too optimistic—perhaps enthusiasm and the dream of realizing my musical ambitions had carried me away. The course, after all, might prove too difficult. I knew that I had no special musical talent. I couldn't even tell one note from another—a page of music looked just like Chinese to me.

But how I *hated* to give up my new hope of learning to play the piano. Music had *always* been for me one of those dreams that never-come-true. I had longed to sit down to the piano and play some old sweet song . . . or perhaps a beautiful classic, a bit from an opera, or even the latest jazz hit. When I heard others playing, I envied them so that it almost spoiled the pleasure of the music for me. For *they* could entertain their friends and family . . . *they* were musicians. And I, I was a mere listener. I had to be satisfied with only *hearing* music.

I was so disappointed at Jack, I felt very bitter as I put away the magazine containing the advertisement. For a week I resisted the temptation to look at it again, but finally I couldn't keep from "peeking" at it. It fascinated me. It told of a woman who had learned to play the piano in 90 days! She had mastered the piano by herself, in her spare time, and at home, without a teacher. And the wonderful method she used required no tedious scales—no heartless exercises—no tiresome practicing. Perhaps *I* might do the same thing!

So finally, half-frightened, half-enthusiastic, I wrote to the U. S. School of Music—without letting Jack know. Almost as soon as I mailed the letter I felt frightened. Suppose the course proved to be horribly difficult. . . . suppose Jack were right after all!

Imagine my joy when the lessons started and I found that it was as easy as A.B.C. Why, a mere child could master it!

While Jack was at work, I started learning. I quickly saw how to blend notes into beautiful melodies. My progress was wonderfully rapid, and before I realized it, I was rendering selections which pupils who study with private teachers for years can't play. For thru this short-cut method, all the difficult, tiresome parts of music have been eliminated and the playing of melodies has been reduced to a simplicity which *anyone* can follow with ease.

Finally I decided to play for Jack, and show him what a "crazy course" had taught me. So one night when he was sitting reading, I went casually over to the piano and started playing a lovely song. Words can't describe his astonishment. "Why . . . why . . ." he floundered. I simply smiled and went on playing. But soon, of course, Jack insisted that I tell him all about it. Where I had learned . . . when I learned . . . how? So I told of my secret . . . and how the course he had laughed at had made me an accomplished musician.

One day not long after, Jack came to me and said: "Mary, don't laugh, but I want to try learning to play the violin by that wonderful method. You certainly proved to me that it is a good way to learn music."

So only a few months later Jack and I were playing together. Now our musical evenings are a marvelous success. Everyone compliments us and we are flooded with invitations. Music has simply meant everything to us. It has given us Popularity! Fun! Happiness!

* * *

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Don't hesitate because you think you have no talent. Thousands of successful students never dreamed they possessed musical ability until it was revealed to them by a wonderful "Musical Ability Test." You, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument thru this short-cut method. Send the coupon. The demonstration lesson showing how they teach will come AT ONCE.

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