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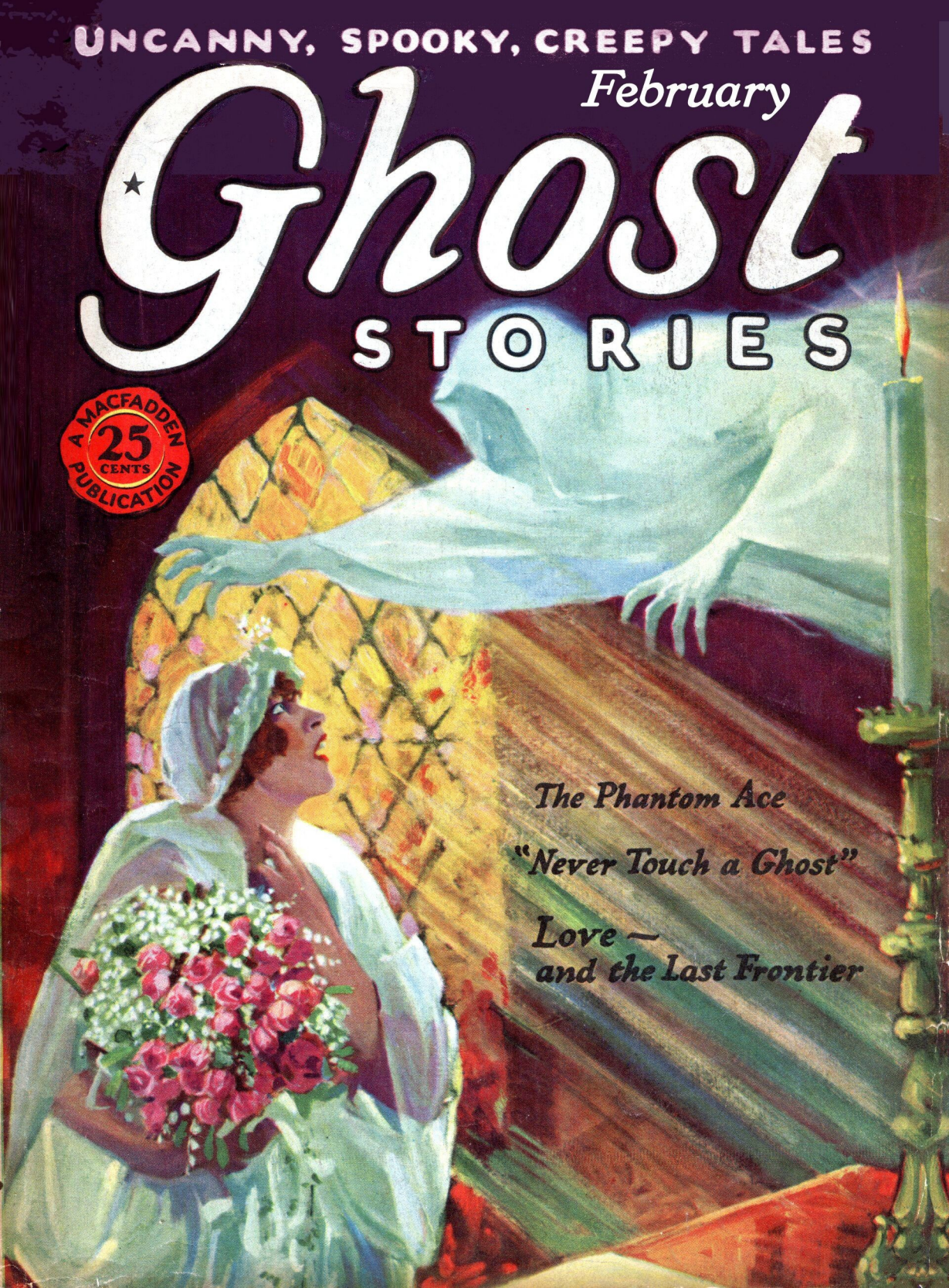

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GHOST STORIES

Vol. 2 February, 1927 No.2

CONTENTS

OF PARTICULAR INTEREST

Published Monthly by THE CONSTRUCTIVE PUBLISHING CORPORATION, Washington and South Aves., Dunellen, N. J.
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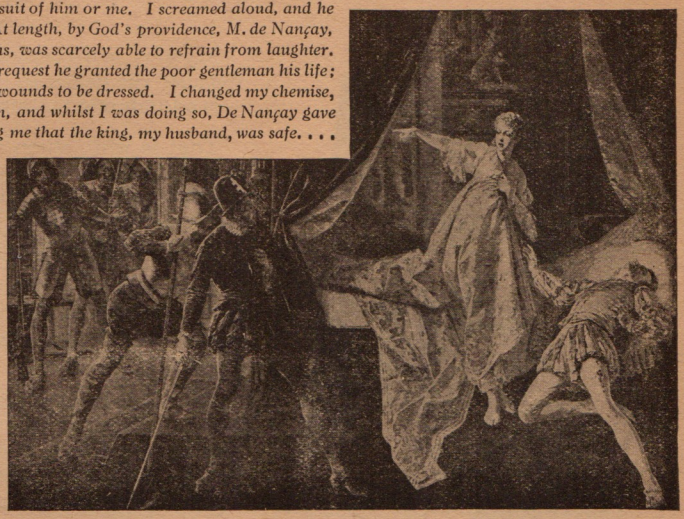
In Queen Margot's Bed-chamber

French memoirs are the most amusing in the world. EDMUND GOSSE.
People like memoirs, especially those of the French court. *The New York Sun.*

I WAS AWAKENED by a noise at the door and a voice calling Navarre! Navarre! *when a wounded man, pursued by four archers, ran in and threw himself upon my bed. I did not then know the poor gentleman; neither was I sure that he meant me no harm, or whether the archers were in pursuit of him or me. I screamed aloud, and he cried out likewise; for our fright was mutual. At length, by God's providence, M. de Nançay, captain of the guard, came in, and seeing me thus, was scarcely able to refrain from laughter. However, he reprimanded the archers and at my request he granted the poor gentleman his life; I had him put to bed in my closet and caused his wounds to be dressed. I changed my chemise, because it was stained with the blood of this man, and whilst I was doing so, De Nançay gave me an account of the events of the night, assuring me that the king, my husband, was safe. . . .*



So Marguerite de Valois, the beautiful sister of Charles IX, set down in her memoirs an account of what she saw and heard when Huguenots were being killed in the corridors of the Louvre on the dreadful night when the massacres of St. Bartholomew began.

In these memoirs she gives you a startling picture of society in an age when life in France was most corrupt. Reared in the midst of the court at Paris when license knew no limit, and the morals of the Valois' kings were at their worst, it is not surprising that Marguerite's own life brought upon her the scandalous lampoons of the DIVORCE SATIRIQUE or that her ideas of discretion when writing her MEMOIRES SECRETES were liberal.

But Margot, as her brothers called her, if not better than the manners of the times demanded, was good-hearted and tolerant in a time of excessive religious intolerance. Her fascinating memoirs rank among the best of her century, the style is admirable; written in simple language of rare distinction they reveal, with piquant frankness, the life of the times and particularly the intrigues of the court. It is as if she showed you

ROYALTY *en déshabille*

Behind the Scenes in the French Courts

Royalty cannot, of course, be always on dress parade. The *private* life of the kings and queens of the courts of France interests you much more than their *official* life that interests the historian. Intimate memoirs written by contemporaries who take you behind the scenes show you the actual life of royalty much more clearly and vividly than do any of the histories.

A Femme de Chambre *Lifts the Veil*

As an example of the intimacy of the character of these memoirs, it may be remarked that Madame du Hausset, *femme de chambre* to Madame de Pompadour, states in the preface to hers that La Pompadour and Louis took no more notice of her presence in a room than if she were a cat or a dog. And Madame du Hausset shows her appreciation of this lack of reserve in the candor, and *naïveté* with which she lifted the veil in an account of their private life—an account which is startling in its revelations.

Intimate and Startling Disclosures

The Marquise de Montespan was not afraid to speak even more frankly of the scandals of her day, nor did the Duchesse d'Orléans hesitate to tell the secrets of the courts of Louis XIV and of the Regency. Madame Campan, who was for nearly twenty years first lady of the bed-chamber to Marie Antoinette, in her memoirs was of course able to give a most lifelike picture of the private life of Louis XVI and his queen during the happy days at Versailles and as the clouds of revolution began to gather. And the Princesse de Lamballe, whose devotion to Marie Antoinette cost her her life, disclosed many secrets of those dark days in the memoirs given here.

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In this series of nine volumes of intimate memoirs all the brilliant society of those days lives before your fascinated gaze. You see kings—often idle, dissolute, and extravagant. Queens—fortunate and unfortunate. And you meet many beautiful and capricious uncrowned queens—Gabrielle d'Estrées, La Vallière, Pompadour, Du Barry, and many others who ruled in a corrupt age. You see the monarchy of France pass through youth, maturity, old age, decrepitude, senility, and finally die. Seen through the eyes of men and women who were a part of it and set down the actual facts as they occurred, you become an eyewitness of a series of vivid and startling flashes that, like lightning, reveal corruption and license equaled only in Babylon and Rome. You see the decay and decline of a luxurious age; civilization fall into the abyss of revolution and the old régime swallowed up by the greatest cataclysm the world has ever seen.

You cannot read one of these volumes and resist the temptation to read the other eight.

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In this series of French memoirs the great charm is that they have all the spirit of the moment, that they are full of details that make the people in them appear as living persons, and that they show you the great as they really were. As to their great interest and value it may be stated that the *New York Herald* has said of them that they are almost a necessity to historical students.

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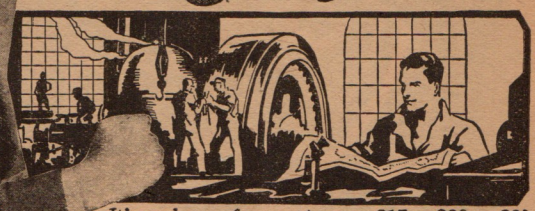

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Banish the Hobgoblins!

By
GEORGE WILLIAM WILDER

FEAR is man's arch-enemy. Fears real, fears imagined, hold man in their grip, sap his vitality, cripple his ambition, kill his energy.

In childhood man fears the dark. He fears the "bully" who lives on his street. He fears new adventures. Every step of his unexperienced way through life is charged with fear.

Coming to man's estate, his mind takes hold of fears without number. Loss of his job—loss of his property—unexpected illness—intrigue on the part of his associates—all hold for him a thousand terrors.

Man and woman alike fear the unknown—fear the hobgoblin array of specters, spooks, phantoms, and ghosts. The very names conjure up in the imagination hordes of fantastic terrors.

And fear is a monster from some unknown bourne that should come into the life of no man or woman who draws breath. Health and fear are incompatible. In a healthy body there must repose and function vitally, a healthy mind. Take care that your body be kept at its highest health-point. Then all the phantoms of untold worlds have no terrors for you.

The man or woman who is sound of body and healthy of mind need fear nothing.

The HAUNT of

Her life slowly ebbing away—her husband's business going to —pretty Vivie Grantham was forced to find a means to kill a tal man combat the influence of the marauding

By Nurse Ellis
Told by Una E. Dary

MY case book tells me that it was an afternoon near the end of June when the sharp ringing of the telephone bell roused me from a nap, and sent me, in kimono and slippers, to answer its insistent call.

"Miss Ellis?" Doctor Rogers' distinct enunciation came clearly over the wire. "I have an interesting case for you. Mrs. Julian Grantham, at Medusa Ridge, needs a nurse. Can you go there at once?"

Dr. Rogers is a specialist in nerve diseases, a man who stands very highly in his chosen field of work. In addition, he has a deep knowledge of the psychic forces which influence human conduct. His cases were usually difficult but, to me at least, they were of an absorbing fascination. Any patient whom he called "interesting" would be a person far removed from the commonplace.

I hastily made preparations for catching the 2:55 train, my mind engaged in trying to correlate the fragmentary recollections which the name Julian Grantham had evoked. I knew that he was the wealthy owner of half a dozen cotton mills in various parts of the country. I seemed to remember that he had been recently married, but an elusive, tragic memory that was associated with his name persistently evaded me. Even after I was seated on the train, and deliberately concentrating on the matter, I was unable to recall the details of the tragedy which I knew was somehow connected with him, and the house I was about to enter.

MEDUSA RIDGE is a two-hour run from the city, one of those places on the south shore which the rich city dwellers have turned into summer paradises of deep lawns, trim hedges and gleaming jewel-like gardens, all enhancing the beauty of the charming homes which surmount the bluffs above the bay. As I taxied from the little station to the Grantham place in the lovely glow of the late afternoon, with the broad blue waters of the bay dimpling and dancing before me, it seemed unbelievable that illness and tragedy could exist in such surroundings.

A butler met me at the door, and having summoned the housekeeper, disappeared toward the rear of the house, leaving me to follow the elderly, sad-faced woman up the broad staircase to a room on the second floor.

"I am Martha McEwan," she said simply, and her accent as well as her name proclaimed her Scottish origin. "I am housekeeper and personal maid to Miss Vivie—I mean Mrs. Grantham," she corrected herself hastily. "She was Vivian Clyde before she married. I've been with her since she was a baby and you see——"

She broke off suddenly, then added: "She'll see you, Miss Ellis, when you've rested up a bit. Your room is next to hers through this connecting door. I hope you'll be able to help her." She sighed heavily, and an expression of deep gloom settled over her features.

Inwardly I decided she was a depressing creature, but I answered her as brightly as I could. "I'm not tired at all. Tell Mrs. Grantham I'll be with her in ten minutes."

I bathed my face, got into my uniform, and tapped on the door that led to Mrs. Grantham's room.

She was lying on a couch drawn up before a window, and, as I entered, her eyes turned to me with an expression I shall never forget. My first impression almost forced itself into the words: "What a beautiful woman!"

But the thought that followed was: "But what a haunted face!"

Here was no ordinary case of nerves. Every movement, even her voice, was languid, as from weakness, yet under the lassitude I sensed something cold and ominous. And that something was fear—stark, naked, terrible fear, that blanched her face, and sapped her strength. What was she afraid of?

In her soft, gentle voice, Mrs. Grantham spoke to me.

"It was so good of you to come. I'm really not ill you know—only tired." She smiled a little. "I think I'll go down to dinner tonight. Mr. Grantham has been away for the day. He'll arrive in time to dine with us. I wonder if you'd mind not wearing your uniform? Mr. Grantham dislikes illness, and I'm afraid he would be distressed if he thought I were ill enough to require a nurse.

"I'm not ill—not really ill, you know. Doctor Rogers assured me you would be a delightful companion, and perhaps while you're here you will forget you are a nurse and consent to be my friend."

All the time she was speaking, her eyes were watching the door behind me, filled with fear for what might enter.

I went back to my room and put on a simple, dark dress for dinner, while a most unusual feeling of depression stole over me—an apprehension. Try as I might, I could not shake it off. I told myself I was tired and hungry, but the leaden weight on my spirits did not lessen.

An unaccountable sensation of dread and horror turned me cold. I fought against it resolutely.

"It's the whole atmosphere of this uncanny house," I muttered to myself. "Notwithstanding its beauty and luxury there is something unnatural here, some sinister emanation that I can *feel* is malevolent."

In spite of all my effort, I entered the dining room a little later with my pulses beating faster than usual.

SURELY there was nothing in that dignified room with its beautiful, old Sheraton furniture and gleaming silver to cause me alarm. Yet I had hardly crossed the threshold when panic swept over me, panic so great that it brought me physical distress. My knees trembled, a nausea turned me faint. Then it passed as quickly as it came, and I found myself facing the master of the house, while Mrs. Grantham introduced me as "a friend who will stay with us a while."

My first glance at Julian Grantham was one of surprise. He was a much younger man than I had supposed, hardly past the middle age, attractive without being at all handsome, well built and tall. Like everyone else in the house of gloom, he appeared to be depressed and downcast, though,

Medusa Ridge

ruin, his reason threatened phantom. How CAN mor- dead?

as we seated ourselves at the table, he made an obvious effort to be entertaining.

Mrs. Grantham was altogether lovely. I knew that rouge and lipstick had contributed the soft bloom that touched cheek and lip with color, but as she sat facing the sunset beyond the wide window, no make-up was visible. She looked like a young girl, delicate and fragile, but with no trace of the illness that was draining her life away.

All the time she was speaking, her eyes were watching the door behind

She was making a brave effort to appear animated and vivacious, and I realized at once that while Mr. Grantham was trying to entertain me, Mrs. Grantham's efforts were all directed towards drawing her husband's attention toward herself. Could that be the reason, the perfectly commonplace explanation of the whole situation, I wondered? Loving her husband madly, was Mrs. Grantham aware that he did not return her love in kind, and was she wearing herself out in a vain effort to win him?

Then there came a pause in the conversation, and I was aware that Mrs. Grantham had turned toward the door in a strained attitude, her eyes again filled with stark fear, watching, watching for the thing she dreaded might enter. I had my answer. Whatever might be the relations between husband and wife, something more poignantly dreadful than unrequited love filled Mrs. Grantham's soul with horror.

The meal dragged—conversation languished. Mr. Grantham became distrait. He answered absently when he was addressed, and finally became silent, apparently lost in thought. Mrs. Grantham's vivacity died. She, too, became silent—and she half turned in her seat, her eyes fixed upon the door to her right. Both seemed to have forgotten my presence.

We sat mute and immobile in the falling dusk. All

pretence at eating was abandoned. I felt as though bound by a spell, while the corners of the room were blotted out by creeping darkness.

Then slowly the door opened, and the figure of a woman entered the dusky room—a shadow among shadows, it moved toward the table. She drew a chair up to the table, and sat down between the husband and wife—a dim figure in the gray light.

Mr. Grantham, his eyes fixed on his plate, lost in abstraction, did not look up. Mrs. Grantham, still turned toward the door, did not change her attitude, or her fixed stare. The newcomer might have been invisible for any notice she received from the strange couple. I wondered that neither of them made any attempt to introduce me to the woman, but suddenly Mrs. Grantham turned to me with a shudder.

"I am ill, Miss Ellis," she said. "Will you help me to my room?"

The spell was broken. I sprang up, conscious of a damp chill in the atmosphere.

Mrs. Grantham leaned on me heavily as we left the room. There was something unnatural, trancelike in the immobility of the two who remained, who sat like statues while I supported the fainting woman as we left the room.

In the hall she collapsed as Martha came running from the rear of the house. Together we got her to her room, administered restoratives, and put her to bed.

I left Martha sitting beside her, and went downstairs determined to rouse Mr. Grantham and acquaint him with the fact that his wife's illness was serious. I meant to find out if he was wholly callous or if his apparent indifference had its root in some other cause.

Twilight had passed now, and the hall was quite dark. The dining room was a cavern of gloom into which light from the big west window cast a dim reflection.

I could see the two figures sitting motionless at the table. A long, white arm encircled Mr. Grantham's neck and—he looked very much worried.

I could hardly interrupt so intimate a tete-a-tete, but I purposely made some noise as I passed the dining room into the next room, which proved to be the library. I found and turned the light switch, revealing a long, comfortably furnished

I could see two figures sitting motionless at the table

room, plentifully supplied with books and magazines—a room inspiring ease and repose. Facing me was a large, flat-topped desk on which was a

silver-framed photograph which instantly attracted my attention. It was the likeness of the woman who was right then seated with Julian Grantham in the dining room.

I studied it carefully. There could be no mistake. I knew that face—strangely foreign . . . . almost Oriental in appearance. As I gazed the conviction grew that deception dwelt beneath that fair exterior—that evil was in those eyes!

I shuddered as I replaced the picture.

When I repassed the dining room the lights were turned on, and a maid was busy at the table. Of Mr. Grantham—or the woman—there was no sign. I went back to my room, and in a moment Martha entered. She had clean linen piled in her arms.

"Miss Vivie is sleeping quietly now," she said, and, almost under her breath, she added, "God help her!"

My mind was still fixed on the woman of the photograph.

"Martha, who was the woman, who came into the dining room tonight?"

For a moment Martha stood like a statue, then the linen dropped from her arms, her face turning the color of old ivory. She grasped at a chair, sank into it, and gasped: "God in heaven, you've seen her, too!"

I soothed and calmed her, and in a few moments she regained her self control.

"It's she," she whispered, "—Mr. Grantham's first wife."

"Martha, what do you mean? Has Mr. Grantham two wives living in the same house?" I exclaimed in stunned amaze.

Martha's trembling increased. "Only one of them is living," she breathed. "The other one died eleven years ago!"

"Are you trying to tell me that I saw a spirit—a ghost—sitting beside Mr. Grantham tonight?"

Fear clutched me sharply. It was too incredible. Such things simply didn't happen! This old woman was trying to infect me with her own insane imaginings.

Then into my mind crowded the host of unpleasant impressions that I had experienced in the few short hours I had been under the Grantham roof. The depressing atmosphere of the place, the unnatural behavior of both the husband and wife, the unescapable feeling of the essential wrongness of it all—as though it were spiritually out of drawing.

"Martha," I said at last, "you must tell me more. I am here to aid you in any way that I possibly can. If I am really to help Mrs. Grantham, I must know what is preying on her mind, and what it is that she fears. You know what is going on in this house, and for the sake of your mistress I beg of you to tell me the whole story."

It was hard for Martha to begin at once, but, started, the tale came with a rush. I think she was glad to find a confidant to whom she could pour out all the stored up terrors which had tortured her for months.

Mr. Grantham when a youth, had met and became infatuated with a dancer who was creating something of a furor in the cafés and dance-halls of the period. She called herself Zuleida and claimed to be Austrian.

She was a lithe, feline creature with a vivid, flaming personality that enthralled Julian Grantham. The day he became twenty-one, and unrestricted master of his fortune, he married her.

Life became a mad orgy for the ill-mated couple—and their friends. Wild parties followed one after another in quick succession, and quarrels were constant and fierce. Zuleida openly attached lovers to herself, but she was insanely jealous of her husband, and if he as much as looked at another woman, the most violent scenes occurred.

Her power was hypnotic, (*Continued on page* 57)

A long, white arm encircled Mr. Grantham's neck and—he looked very much worried

Dancers in the Sea

One diver went down to the bottom of the sea, to come up dead of heart failure—another diver came up a maniac—and when Bill Hacker went down, he found a horror worse than death

By
Bill Hacker, *Deep Sea Diver*

As told to
W. A. Cornish

I HAD come back from the war—and lost my girl. She had married another man.

Naturally I was feeling low as I walked slowly along Pennsylvania Avenue, in Washington, trying to think out some solution of my troubles.

Funny I should meet Blake right then—an old pal of mine. He almost bumped into me.

"Just signed up with the Overseas Salvage Corporation as Senior Officer in charge of an expedition bound for the Mediterranean," he informed me. "Why not come along?"

I rubbed my eyes and stared. Yes, it was Lieutenant Blake all right.

"Nothing too Big—Nothing too Far—Nothing too Deep," he droned in a sing-song tone, then burst into a loud laugh. "Come on, Bill—let's go!"

Guess that was their trade slogan for I noticed it at the top of the contract I signed the next morning.

With one stroke of the pen I was metamorphosed from a chief gunner's mate into a deep-sea diver. Anybody who knows anything about this, knows that was some jump, and it would be putting it mildly to say that I was elated with this sudden turn in fortune.

And the pay—about five times as much as I had received from Uncle Sam, though I had rated a C. P. O.'s chevrons overseas. I might mention too that this matter of pay didn't deter my enthusiasm any.

We sailed the following week—a party of eight. Lieutenant Blake acquainted us with the intimate details of our job as we were crossing the Atlantic in the big Cunarder. It seemed unreal—the luxurious staterooms, the music, beautiful women and dancing in the salon—after two years of cramped iron bunks and four-hour watches.

"This is de-life, boys," Slim Galvin was fond of repeating.

Slim, a tall, sharp-featured fellow, was our ace diver. Diving—like every other game, including flying and baseball—has its aces. Slim was our Guynemeier, our Walter Johnson. A twin-hitch, ex-service diver, Slim could have pointed to a fancy string of upside-down altitude records as long as your arm. But he never did. Slim was one of the most modest chaps I ever knew.

The Salvage Company had contracted, Lieutenant Blake explained, to recover 1,000,000 pounds sterling in gold bullion, a mere bagatelle of $5,000,000, from a water-proof safe in the submerged cabin of the S. S. Frisia, a 4,000-ton Russian merchantman lying somewhere on the bottom of the Black Sea. The Frisia had been rammed and sunk the previous winter of 1918 by a Bolshevik patrol boat in the harbor of Odessa.

Two months later—in June. 1919, to be exact—we had rigged-up and moored a lighter about 200-yards off the shore. Less than 250 feet back from where we lay, doubly anchored, the Black Sea drops off from the harbor ledge to sheer depths of a mile or more.

For a week the dull boom of the surf on the jutting pier heads had been like the roar of distant artillery. But one Monday—a day of ill-omen in the Navy—the skies cleared and the sea became several shades lighter.

The Black Sea derives its name from its murky color, and its color from the dreary reflection of dull, overcast skies. While the Mediterranean is always blue because of the deep sapphire of the sky, the Black Sea is a dark mirror reflecting leaden skies. There are no coloring pigments in the water.

The shadowy, hostile waters constantly reached with skeleton white-tipped fingers over the sides of the lighter. They quieted down by noonday. The sun broke through the dismal sky and diving conditions became as propitious as could be reasonably expected. We prepared for several hours of diving.

THE apparatus, consisting of an air pump, depth lines, lowering line and two regulation diving suits with harness equipment, which had been previously rigged on the shore side, was carefully inspected.

Slim was our lead-off man. He was assisted into his suit, and slowly descended the ladder over the side. He paused on a bottom rung, the lower half of his body in the water, while I clamped the heavy glass visor into place. Holding to the ladder with one bare hand, he thrust the other into the sea. He recoiled as from the bite of an adder.

"Ugh!" he shuddered. "Cold as ice!"

After a final rehearsal of the pre-arranged call signals Slim dropped beneath the surface.

Deep sea diving is an art—of a sort. A highly intricate, dangerous sort. The air pump, equipped with a high-pressure gauge, is manned by two men. A third operative manipulates a measuring line. Two others attend to the lowering rope. The whole operation is in charge of a supervisor, usually the Senior Officer, who, with a constant eye on his watch, coordinates the depth as indicated by the measuring tape with the air pressure registered by the dial gauge. A slip on the part of any one of these workers might prove extremely dangerous to the man below.

The air pressure is increased as the diver is lowered, to counteract the greater volume of water at the lower levels. An over-supply of air near the surface would inflate the suit and neutralize the weight of the diver, reinforced as he is by 3½-inch leaden soles, so that he could neither go down nor up. The diver may, however, guard against any such excess of air by manipulating a valve in the side of his helmet.

Too little air at a great depth would prove doubly dangerous as the diver would be liable to be crushed to death by the waters pressing in upon him without sufficient air pressure to combat them. Air is pumped to the diver through a durable black rubber hose of the ordinary garden variety.

Pure air is employed for all diving purposes. An air reserve is also carried aboard submarines for use in case of emergency. I mention this because I have found that many persons suppose that oxygen is used. Raw oxygen would choke a man—literally burn him to death.

The depth line played out slowly. At the end of 11 minutes it showed a depth of 80 feet, then 85, then 90. The signals had come intermittently, but without cessation. When the tape measured 90 feet at the water line it suddenly stopped. It twitched spasmodically for a few seconds and then was still. Only the loose coil floated lazily on the water.

"Fright! A fear of something —I don't know what—caused this man's death."

The man at the line started. The two at the pump turned the handles mechanically, forcing air ninety feet down to their comrade. Two others on the lowering rope—as is always the case in an emergency—began to hoist. Not too rapidly for there was no answering signal. The air was being decreased at the same relative rate that it had been applied—minute for minute.

After what seemed an eternity—it was exactly eleven minutes—the inert, rubber-swathed Slim was hauled over the side. The moment that we let go our hold, the suit, crumpling like an empty grain sack, sloughed to the deck in a heap.

The visor was hurriedly unclamped. A pallid face, drained of blood and with wide-open staring eyes, lay beneath. The eyes seemed all white; the pupils had shrunk to mere pin pricks of jet. An expression of rigid terror was frozen on the man's countenance.

There was no need for a pulmotor. Death—ghastly, stark, horrible—leered from beneath the copper helmet.

Lieutenant Blake, after a hurried examination, stated that death had come from heart failure.

"Fright! A fear of something—I don't know what—caused this man's death," he explained. There were no evidences of the dread "caisson disease," the scourge of veteran divers. Its symptoms are too easily discerned to mistake.

Fear gripped us—fear of the unknown . . . of the eerie, alien "lost world" beneath unnaturally darkened waters. And then by degrees the initial consternation wore away. It was supplanted by a certain grim seriousness. For it was the summer after the war and men were not unaccustomed to the dead being hoisted over the sides of ships, or to gleaming white canvas bags slipping overboard into the sea while the crew stood by with bared heads.

Slim was loosed from his diving paraphernalia and carried below.

I turned to the second diver who had been preparing to relieve Slim. He was stretching a wide rubber wrist-band and letting it snap back against the palm of his hand. Perspiration was coursing down his face. It ran in tiny streams to his neck where it was absorbed in a ragged fringe of blue jersey.

A dry laugh caused me to wheel (*Continued on page* 90)

The SOUL of

There was every reason why Mathilda Markham's
The evil hands that aimed to steal the Mark-

By George Higby

ONE hot afternoon in late September, a telegram came to my office from a lawyer in Ridgefield, telling me that Mathilda, my aunt, had been taken suddenly with a heart seizure, and had passed on.

The news came as less of a shock than might be supposed, for I had known for some time that such an end was likely. It was clearly up to me to go to Ridgefield at once, for I was nearest of kin, and thus the burden of arranging for the funeral and the winding up of Aunt Mathilda's affairs fell upon me.

Quickly as I could I turned over the conduct of my office to young Collins, a capable assistant who had been with me about five years, telling him I would be away about a week.

I went home, broke the news to my wife, packed a bag and caught the first train out of New York. An hour later I was at Ridgefield station and hustled into a taxi for the two-mile drive to the house.

Dismissing the taxi outside the grounds, I walked up the long gravel drive, so familiar to me, for several summers of my boyhood had been spent at Aunt Mathilda's, and I loved the old-fashioned place and all its associations.

Quietly opening the heavy oak door with its brightly burnished brass knocker, I stepped into the entrance lobby and glanced about me. No one had come at my knock so I went on into the sitting room.

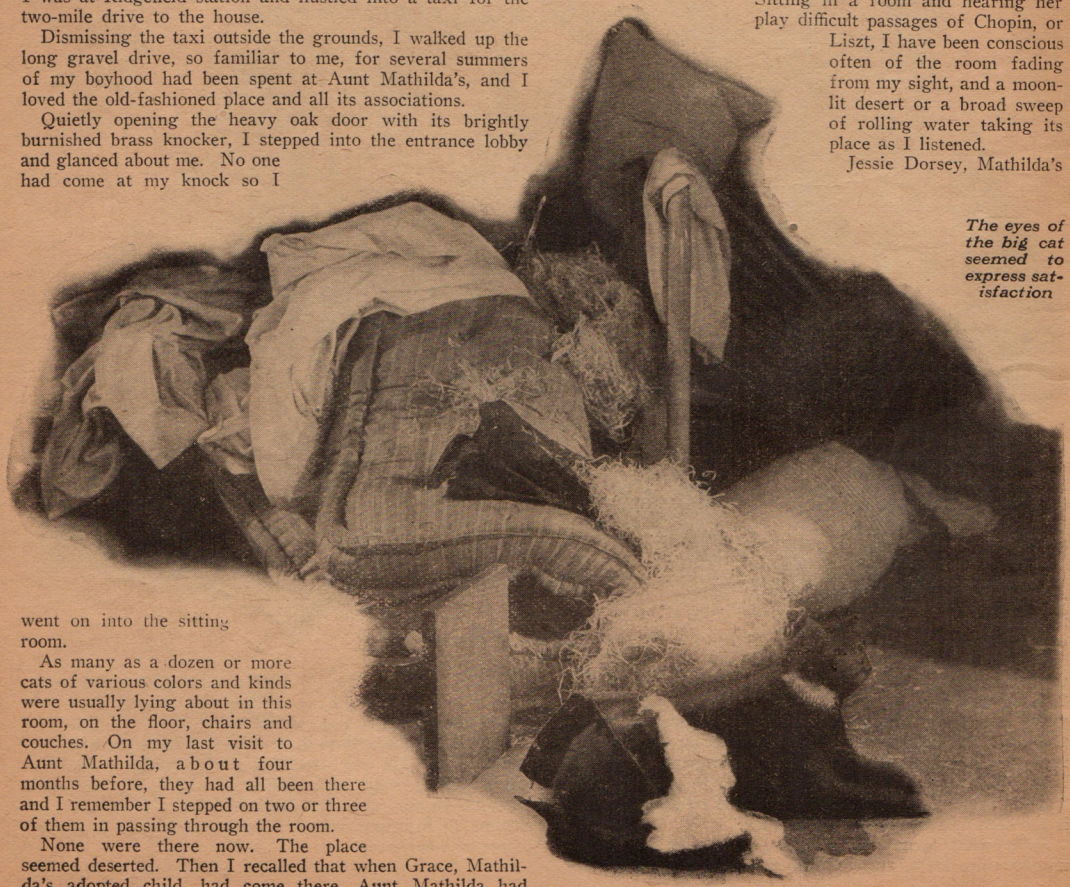
As many as a dozen or more cats of various colors and kinds were usually lying about in this room, on the floor, chairs and couches. On my last visit to Aunt Mathilda, about four months before, they had all been there and I remember I stepped on two or three of them in passing through the room.

None were there now. The place seemed deserted. Then I recalled that when Grace, Mathilda's adopted child, had come there, Aunt Mathilda had disposed of most of her pets. It was said that the child, a pretty girl of ten with golden curls, so completely filled her life that she felt it was time wasted caring for them.

I found little Grace heartbroken. I took her to me and comforted her as best I could. After the funeral my wife took her to our home, and in a short time she found solace with us.

I might mention, just here, that the child was passionately fond of music and possessed a wonderful technique for one so young. Her tiny fingers would run over the key-board of the piano with the touch of a master. Sitting in a room and hearing her play difficult passages of Chopin, or Liszt, I have been conscious often of the room fading from my sight, and a moonlit desert or a broad sweep of rolling water taking its place as I listened.

Jessie Dorsey, Mathilda's



The eyes of the big cat seemed to express satisfaction

BLACK TOBIAS

money should have been left to her adopted child. ham fortune did not reckon on—Tobias

As told to Mark Mellen

widowed sister, rode with us to the cemetery on the day of the burial. She had counted on having Mathilda's money for herself and her three children, when her sister died—until Grace had been adopted. Thereafter she hated the child. As we rode along I caught her black eyes staring hard at Grace. Her thin lips were tightened and there was a cruel look on her face.

Sensing the stare, Grace instinctively shrank against me, putting her hand up on my coat lapel in an effort to circle my neck. Her eyes opened wide in mute appeal to me to protect her. I squeezed her hand in sympathy.

Later, I was to learn the terrifying significance of this incident.

Early Monday morning I looked up Ronald Cortelyou, the Ridgefield lawyer who handled Mathilda's affairs. I found him a man of fifty or so, impressive in black suit of conservative cut. He wore neat old-fashioned sideburns which added an air of dignity to his otherwise warm and easy manner.

"Ah, yes, Mr. Higby—nephew of Mathilda Markham. She was a lady, sir, whose influence can ill afford to be lost to Ridgefield. Come right in, sir."

I was ushered into a small office marked "Private," and when I had taken a chair beside a roll-top desk littered with papers in topsy-turvy disorder, Cortelyou cleared his throat and asked:

"Now then, sir, what can I do for you?"

"I came to see you about Miss Markham's will. It ought to be filed for probate without delay, don't you think?"

"Her will—ah, yes. Let me see, let me see." Lawyer Cortelyou took a thoughtful pose. "There is something about that will which might give us trouble, Mr. Higby. My office here, I regret to say, had a fire some nine months ago, and many of my papers were destroyed, sir—destroyed. Your Aunt's will was among them. But—" he raised his hand quickly, as if I were about to call him down for

"Jessie! Jessie!" I called. "Speak to me!"

carelessness, "Miss Markham had a copy, sir, duly witnessed and with the notary's deposition on it."

He seemed to study the matter for a moment, then added: "If you can get that, we are saved, sir. You see—" sweeping his arm, "my offices are now equipped with metal—*metal* file cases, and the loss of such papers as your aunt's will is no longer possible. I trust you will be indulgent with a man whose pride kept him from disclosing this loss to your aunt, sir. If you will be good enough to look among the late Miss Markham's effects, I'm certain you will find that copy of her will, and we will be able to proceed."

I WAITED in silence until he had finished, marveling as he spoke, that such lax business methods as filing valuable documents in a wooden file-case would be permitted in this advanced business age. But then, I knew Aunt Mathilda and the old-fashioned style in which she lived, even including the way she furnished her home, so I couldn't wonder at her choice of attorney.

"I guess there's nothing for me to do but hunt her copy of the will," I said, accepting the situation.

I went back to the house and began my hunt for the will.

I started with the library, a room to the right of the house as one walked in, and at the rear, back of the living room. This library was lined with book-shelves from floor to ceiling on all four walls, except where doors and windows and fire-place were cut in. In the center of the room were three overstuffed mahogany chairs, each with its reading lamp, arranged side by side, like the reading chairs of a modern club-room are lined against a wall.

But what interested me in the room were an old writing desk of carved mahogany, and an old-style safe with single dial that stood behind a wooden sectional screen in one corner. The desk, at the back wall, I found open, and a hasty search showed that it held only receipted bills and a few personal letters. In one of the pigeon-holes I found a series of figures on a faded slip of paper, scrawled in Aunt Mathilda's handwriting. This I took to be the combination of the safe.

"Suddenly I woke up. Something, or someone, was in the room. I felt it beyond a doubt. Then as I stared ahead there appeared out of the dark a pair of green, glassy eyes—the eyes of that stuffed cat! They were near the fire-escape window and were moving toward me, growing larger every second.

"With one bound I was out of bed and—"

Two minutes later I had the safe open. But I was due for disappointment. I found it was absolutely empty.

My first thought was that some one had beaten me to it. To make sure that I had missed nothing, I lighted a match and held it inside. There was a heavy coating of dust on the safe's two shelves showing me that it hadn't been used for years.

But why have it there, if not to hold valuable papers? I asked myself.

THEN in a flash the answer came: Clever old Mathilda! She kept her valuables somewhere else, and the safe was there only for a blind. I reasoned that a burglar coming into the house would make for the safe the first thing. By putting her important possessions somewhere else, she hoped to outwit the searcher. How like her! But where had she put the stuff?

I set to work in earnest, then, to comb the house, room by room, from top to cellar. And as I went along, I felt the challenge growing within me that here was a problem—to find Aunt Mathilda's secret hiding place.

I mounted the stairs and turned toward the front of the house, to tackle Aunt Mathilda's bedroom first. I reasoned that she might have wished her valuables as near to her person as she could get them. In that case there must be a hiding place of some sort in her room.

Climbing those stairs, I had an experience I can only describe as uncanny. Ten steps or so above me I thought I heard a noise as of scampering feet. Quickly I looked up, but saw nothing. Then there came to my ears the long drawn yowl of a cat, loud and eerie—coming, it seemed, from the top of the stairs I was on. But I could see nothing.

The uncanny yowl rose a second time, sending the chills racing up and down my spine. Alone in that house as I was, I allowed my nerves for a moment to get the better of me.

"One of Aunt Mathilda's flock of cats still in the house," I told myself. "Nothing spooky about that."

But since I had heard the yowl and the scampering of padded feet, and yet had seen no cat, I wasn't very confident of myself.

I WENT along the hall until I came to a high oak door on my right. Opening this, I stepped into a quaint room, the like of which would be hard to find so close to modern New York in this day and age. The impression was of an eighteenth century bedroom from a New England farmhouse, with four-poster bed, wide-boarded floor covered sparsely with throw-rugs of hooked workmanship, a high-boy, a spinnet desk—all in mahogany.

One thing dominated the room and as I looked at it a chill went through me. Directly across the doorway, and within arm's reach of the bed, was an enormous stuffed cat. It stood on a pedestal four feet or so from the floor, and its green eyes were fixed upon me with a human-like stare that seemed to follow me wherever I moved.

The brute was black in color, except for its white throat and this somehow gave it a ghastly look. I had seen it before when it was alive. It had been the largest in Aunt Mathilda's collection and on account of some intangible thing about the creature that I could never explain, I had always avoided it.

That cat was Tobias. Of all Aunt Mathilda's pets, Tobias undoubtedly took first place in her affections. No other cat she owned before or since was with her as much, or received as much attention as this same Tobias. And the brute in life had seemed to sense its importance in Aunt Mathilda's regard, for it followed her close like a watch dog will, at her heels everywhere, and was extremely jealous of its place.

Tobias holds a place in the family's history that cannot be overlooked here. He was the cause of the breach between Aunt Mathilda and her sister Jessie. And the trouble was quite simple.

Jessie, visiting the house one summer, suddenly started from her chair and cried out:

"Mathilda, in God's name why do you keep that horrible cat? Those eyes! Why, it stares at me and stares at me as if I had killed somebody, and it was here to see I didn't escape punishment for my crime. Get away, you feline devil, before I wring your neck with my bare hands!" she screamed.

"Why, Jessie!" Aunt Mathilda had exclaimed in her gentle manner. "Why—why——"

But the harm had been done. (*Continued on page* 80)

Chester had found Sonya in a dance hall in Paris—in the arms of a British officer

The Phantom ACE

By Aden Ashton

As told to
Edwin A. Goewey

"ALL right, Wells—my coat. Guess I'll be a bit late. If Palmer telephones, tell him I'm on my way. Hang it, a busy man never should accept invitations to social— —"

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling-g-g!! Ting-g-ling-g-g-g-!!!

The doorbell jangled as if the one at the button meant business, and was determined to gain immediate entrance.

I jammed my cigarette angrily into a tray and smudged the fire. "What the devil——"

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling-g-g!! Ting-g-a-ling-g-g-g!!! it clanged.

"Go ahead, Wells," I cried, snatching my coat. "See what our caller wants—before he smashes his way in. But, remember, I'm late. Unless it's vital, stall. Say I'm out—anything to get rid of him."

I lighted another cigarette and stepped to the doorway. From below came a rumble of voices. One, which I did not recognize, was in a high-pitched tone. Then I caught the words, "I tell you it's most important. I can't go 'til I get an answer."

Wells was back almost im-

Chester Reynolds was dead. Yet friends saw him—heard him—talked to him!

mediately. He closed the door behind him and handed me an envelope.

"It's Courtney, sir, Mr. Hewitt's chauffeur—with this. The car's at the curb. He wouldn't be put off, sir. Said he just had——"

AS I ripped the flap, I noted it was sealed with wax. Obviously it contained a message of exceptional importance for Tom Hewitt to take this precaution to have its contents kept from possible prying eyes.

The single sheet was covered with writing in Tom's familiar, cramped scrawl.

THE MAPLES,
Hillcrest-on-the-Hudson.

"Dear Aden: Am in trouble. Must have your counsel and help without delay. The matter is so serious I couldn't communicate with you either by telephone or wire. Have sent Courtney so as to make certain this will reach no hands but yours. When you read what follows, don't think I've suddenly gone mad or been drinking. Just remember the old days in Flanders when you used to insist I was without nerves. I'm still hard boiled—ordinarily. But I'm up against something now that's too much for me.

"Just a week ago, and last night again, I saw Chester Reynolds' ghost, here at my place. He came right down before me, in an airplane—then disappeared.

"I can't be mistaken! If you doubt it, get this—the airplane he used was my own, and he left it standing on the lawn. My plane, understand — *that had been locked in its hangar.*

"I simply can't figure it out, Aden. For old times sake—the days when you and I and Chester flew together, and—more important—because you are the only one among my acquaintances who understands anything at all about supernatural things—come at once.

Courtney will bring you in the car.

HEWITT.

"I watched, fascinated"

"Chester Reynolds' phantom!" The words seemed to be pounding through my brain. I had suddenly become cold, all over.

I managed to pull myself together, and walking to the center table, spread out the sheet and re-read it—close to the light—slowly, deliberately.

Tom Hewitt had been in deadly earnest when he penned that message. He surely had seen something. I wondered what—and its significance. However, there was but one answer to his appeal. To go to him, and at once.

"Wells, Mr. Hewitt's message has changed my plans. He is a bit ill. I am going to spend a few days with him at *The Maples*. Tell Courtney I shall be with him in a few minutes."

"And Mrs. Palmer? The dance?"

"Oh, yes. When I have gone, telephone her. My regrets—you know. Explain that an intimate relative is dangerously ill. That I had to catch a train—at once. But, understand, nothing more. Particularly—say nothing about my destination. After that, get Mr. Hewitt on the wire, personally. Tell him just one thing—the exact time when I leave here."

While Wells went below to give my message to Hewitt's man, I touched a match to the letter and tossed it into the fire-place.

Ten minutes later, after a lightning switch to tweeds, and with a change in my grip, I swung beside Courtney in Hewitt's favorite car, a speedy one of Italian make, and we were off, tearing through Central Park and on into Riverside Drive, heading northward for Tom's summer place on the Hudson in the upper reaches of Westchester.

As we turned into the parkway along the river, splendid beneath a full moon which lighted it from bank to bank, I was grateful for the cooling breeze it sent shoreward. For my brain was in a turmoil and my nerves were strung to highest tension. I needed just such a tonic to calm me, to enable me to reason clearly.

That I was on no wild-goose chase I felt certain—not with Tom Hewitt sending for me. He wasn't that kind.

Closing my eyes, I seemed for the moment to be back

again on the French front. Tom and Ted Ritchie and Chester and I had gone over, with the first detachment of flyers from Canada. And shoulder to shoulder we had struggled through the fearful hell of strife, had seen the kind of service that had blistered the very souls of men, until Chester had come crashing down—to his death.

And now, after years, he had come back, in the spirit, to Tom, one of his favorite buddies. Not once, but twice. But why? Not for a sinister purpose, surely. For he had loved us all. Perhaps, then, to convey a warning, to try to prevent some disaster.

I REALIZED why Tom had sent for me rather than for Ritchie, even though our divergent duties had kept us apart, except at infrequent intervals, since the armistice. He had hinted his reason in his letter. It was because I long had given close study to matters of the occult, to things beyond the ken of most humans. I never had been a scoffer when I did not understand. Instead, I had tried to learn, to understand. On two occasions my studies had carried me to India. And of the mysterious things I had seen there I had written books which had won me some recognition as one who had gone considerably beyond the average in peering across the intangible border line which separates the living from those who have passed on.

In his dilemma Tom had summoned me, believing I would meet with greater success than he had in reading the amazing riddle thrust upon him.

Again my thoughts went back to the past, the past of us four. Perhaps there I would discover some inkling of the cause that had brought Chester back.

We four, intimates from boyhood and through the days when we had battled on track and field for the honor of Old Eli, had been known as the "Four Musketeers." When the call had gone forth for all those unafraid to enter the lists on one side or the other in the great gamble for world supremacy, we had crossed the border, together as usual, and had volunteered.

And we had been in the thick of it, even in those early stages. Tom had written truthfully in his letter. In those days he had possessed no nerves. Times uncounted he had gone out against the invading planes, ripping and dropping them, but always coming back right side up and whole, winning the "Legion," then the Cross, and finally the Palms.

But it had been Chester, good old comrade, who had been our leader. A shade less daring than Hewitt, perhaps. Still, all men loved him for his simple, unaffected earnestness and followed wherever he led. And he had led us, time and again, until that awful day when he had driven his plane into the clouds. We had dragged his broken body from the wreck of his machine. Then he had been taken from us and sent behind the lines to be patched up—or to die.

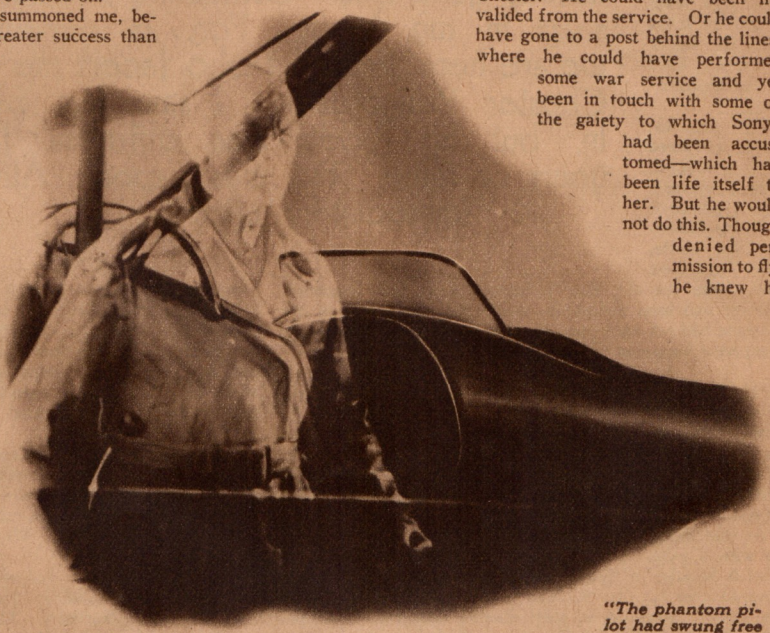
He hadn't died. Perhaps it would have been better—— But he had come back to us, after months, his spirit unbroken, but with a leg twisted and a foot that dragged badly when he walked.

However, he did not come back alone. A woman was with him, a nurse who wore the insignia of a French Red Cross unit. He called her Sonya. And he introduced her as his wife. His earnest eyes lighted with a new fire when he held her hand and told us how she had nursed him, after he had turned back from the edge of the Great Divide and was battling for recovery.

She was a beautiful creature, this Sonya, part Muscovite and part French. She had been singing in the Paris cabarets when the thunder of the first war guns had rolled over the land, and had volunteered as a nurse. Her hair was midnight black, accenting the dead whiteness of her skin and the trace of glow high on her cheeks. But it was her eyes that caught and held one. Great green-brown eyes, like those of the cobra, that fascinated but never smiled.

Perhaps, had she come without Chester, any of us would have tried to know her, intimately. But, as his wife, we feared for him. We admitted this, to one another. For she was the kind whose presence set most men's pulses to throbbing and turned hot the blood within them. And fate had linked her with the most unworldly among us, the one least fitted to tame and hold such a woman.

I bit my lip until the blood started. The thought had me going. I could not banish thoughts of her—and of Chester. He could have been invalided from the service. Or he could have gone to a post behind the lines, where he could have performed some war service and yet been in touch with some of the gaiety to which Sonya had been accustomed—which had been life itself to her. But he would not do this. Though denied permission to fly, he knew he could be of service at the front, advising, planning, helping to remake some of the machines brought down in combat.



"The phantom pilot had swung free of the cockpit and stood with his back toward me."

But his wife went back to the great city—to nurse, she said. She left Chester with kisses and tears. She left him to dream of a future with her, when the echo of the war's last shot died away—left him to eat his heart out with loneliness for her.

Sonya soon forgot. Her marriage had been but a gesture, just one more thrill in the life of this woman of the world, one utterly incapable of stability. And, though still wearing the cross of the man whose name she bore, she quickly became one of the most conspicuous figures among those who made a mockery of the war by their mad life in the French capital. Then came more tantalizing whispers, brutal and sinister in their purport. We never repeated them. We

begged others to keep them from Chester. But we knew he knew. For, though he carried his shoulders with the grit of a warrior, his eyes could not lie.

THEN, one day, he disappeared. We learned he had obtained leave and had gone to Paris. The fact numbed us with dread. But the news which came back within the week sent us white hot with rage. Chester had found Sonya, in a dance hall in Paris—in the arms of a British officer.

The Englishman was all but dead when they dragged our friend from his throat. Sonya had fled. He came back to us, broken. Then came the last great rush of the Boche before the check at the Marne. Our planes, by dozens and by hundreds, were sent aloft to turn back the invaders.

Chester managed to slip into one of them and take off. Hewitt shrieked the news to me as I was making for my plane and pointed. Paralyzed for the moment, I stood and gazed. Only in the chaos of such a mad hour could he have dodged the officers. Up, up he went! I followed him with my glasses. Then suddenly his machine seemed to die, to lose its momentum and hang suspended in the air. In agony I cried and motioned helplessly.

The next instant it turned and plunged, nose downward, like a plummet.

It was following the sortie, after I had come back from the air, that I learned what had happened. Chester had been picked up—dead. But the wreck of his machine had not been caused by an enemy shot. Something must have happened to the motor, they said.

> "'For the first time in my life, I think, my nerves gave way. Something seemed to snap in my brain. For, as certain as we are here, the pilot who faced me was Chester Reynolds . . . I saw him plainly, but his body was different from yours or mine. He was vapor. Almost immediately after . . .'"

THAT night, beyond the reaches of stranger ears, we talked of our friend's end—Hewitt and Ritchie and I. And we wondered if it had been Sonya, not the Boche or an accident, that had been the cause of Chester's death. We wondered if he had purposely killed his engine and deliberately sent his plane down in a nose-dive—to bring an end to a misery against which he could no longer struggle.

As that thought flashed through my brain, I straightened up with a gasp. For another came crowding in upon it. Was it because of Sonya, rather than some danger which hovered over Hewitt, that had caused Chester to return in the spirit? Was she in some manner concerned in something in which Tom or Ritchie or I should take an immediate interest? Was he trying to warn us?

For she had passed through the war unscathed. And to her had been forwarded the money realized from the sale of the estate of our friend. Despite what we knew, and suspected, we had not tried to prevent this. Without knowledge of Chester's last thoughts, we could not interfere.

It had been my distasteful duty to complete the legal steps. She had attempted to explain away the past to me. And almost with the same breath she had put forth the appeal of her sensuous personality to sweep me from my feet. But I was not of Chester's type. I had seen too much of the world—and woman.

I had left her when the last document was signed and sealed, in France. I never had seen her since. Others of my acquaintance, however, had seen her many times. And they had told me she still was wondrously beautiful, still madly enticing—that, with the fortune which had come to her through Chester, she always could be found among the maddest of Europe's pleasure seekers.

A few words from Courtney, which I did not catch, snapped me from my reverie. But a quick glance at the landmarks we were passing explained their significance. We were speeding along our last mile. In next to no time we would reach *The Maples*.

I was glad for the break. My mental reminiscing had become morbid. I had been conjuring phantoms of my own making—such as Sonya. When I learned what Tom actually had seen, a hundred to one the matter would take on an entirely new complexion.

The car began to slow down, then swung through a high arched gate-way and over a gravel road between lanes of great trees. I noted but a scattered light or two in the shadowy pile before which we moved and came to an almost noiseless halt.

The next moment Hewitt came from the shadows. His hand, hot and moist, grasped mine in a crushing grip as I dropped from the car and pulled my grip after me.

"Put up the machine, Courtney, and go to bed." Tom's tone was even, without a note of tremble. But, as the car disappeared, he threw an arm over my shoulder and again gripped me with a tense pressure which betrayed the strain which he was holding in check, trying to master.

However, no further words were spoken until we had entered the library, his favorite retreat, in a far corner of the mansion, and the door had been locked. Not until he had me comfortably seated in a great chair beside him, with only a shaded light upon a table at our elbows to break the shadows which appeared to fog the great room, did he speak.

"Mighty good of you to come so promptly, Aden. But I knew I could depend on you. There's something almost devilish behind this, old man—something which has had me half crazy trying to figure out. However, you understand such things better than I. Maybe Chester will let you know what he wants."

"How many besides yourself have seen this phantom?"

"None, as far as I know. Had the servants seen anything, they would have blurted it. As for my guests—not a word."

"Oh, you have guests?"

"Yes, three. I'll explain about them later. The vital point now is to tell you what I have seen."

"You're right. And I'll interrupt as little as possible."

HEWITT bent closer, and his words came almost in a whisper:

"I returned from Europe a month ago, bringing two guests. This being the finest time of the year up here, I brought them directly to *The Maples*. My third guest arrived ten days later. There was the customary entertainment—bridge, drives, motor boating—and now and then I took one or another of them up in my plane. It's a new one, by the way. I shipped it over from the other side. It was kept in a hangar built while I was away, out beyond the stables. Incidentally, the place is always locked. Now get this: I am the only one who (*Continued on page* 85)

"Never Touch a Ghost!"

This artist thought the spirit world could be merged with mortal life. He learned a terrible lesson—too late

By Forrest L. King

I HAVE told this story but once. The person to whom I related it, laughed in my face.

I swore then never to tell it again. But I must. It will kill me if I don't. It haunts me day and night.

I sometimes wonder if I am crazy. No one seems to think me insane. My associates even consider me witty and brilliant. And I often think I am almost happy. Then I think of my horrible experience and its tragic end.

If I could in any way explain this experience which I am about to relate . . . but it is beyond human explanation!

If I could go to the place of the dead and point to a grassy mound and say, "There!" it would be better. If I could go to the rhythmic tide of the sea and say, "There!" I could forget. If I could go to any place in earth, heaven or hell and say, "There!" I would be satisfied.

But I can't do it. She simply disappeared. But where? . . . why? . . . how?

I would be tempted to say it was a phantom I had seen, but the music of the instrument and the sound of her voice were real. And she was flesh . . . I touched her once. Then like a flower scorched by a hot death dealing breeze she was no more.

I remember every little detail of this experience. One night in mid-July I was sitting in my studio gazing absent-mindedly out the window. Silently, so silently that I could scarcely hear it, the door to my room swung gently open. At the same instant the summer air wafted to me the scent of an enticing perfume from the open door.

I looked up and beheld standing in the doorway the slender figure of a beautiful girl.

I spoke to her and arising from my chair asked her to come in. (*Continued on page 62*)

I looked up and beheld standing in the doorway the slender figure of a beautiful girl

The Affair of the

Coffins—things of lead and bronze and wood—cannot be tumbled human agencies. Yet the Durkee coffins were scattered about in the was securely fastened

OUR town has recently been shaken by the most terrifying mystery that ever occurred there. It's a little Georgia town I'll call Bridgeville, because that comes pretty close to being its real name.

Ghostly happenings make more of an impression in the South than elsewhere. The really amazing details, however, are known only to myself and my wife. We were the principal living actors in the affair. So I guess I am the one who should tell the story.

I was assistant cashier of the Bridgeville National Bank when I became engaged to Helen Durkee. My crowd thought it a splendid match for me to have made, for my family had neither money nor social position, while the Durkees were gilt-edged aristocrats. I felt flattered, of course, but the important thing was that Helen and I were deeply in love with each other.

Her parents were dead. She and her three younger sisters lived in the ancestral home on Oglethorpe Street, with their uncle, Edward Durkee, and his wife. The uncle was the sole executor of the girls' estate.

Durkee was considered an upright business man. He maintained a small balance at the bank, but I knew personally that his safety deposit box was filled with bonds, mortgage deeds, etc., which totalled nearly a hundred thousand dollars.

Helen and I were to have been married within a month when the crash came. Edward Durkee shot himself—leaving neatly arranged on his desk a set of documents which proved that he had ruined the family. He had borrowed heavily on all securities, and had lost the money gambling in Wall Street stocks.

BUT his vilest crime had been to raise $20,000 on a promissory note, in which he pledged bonds that had been already mortgaged. This amounted to obtaining money under false pretences—a prison offense.

He had tricked Helen into endorsing the note, making her equally responsible with himself, the very day she had come of age. This ruse had enabled him to get the note extended for a year. It was to fall due now in two weeks' time. The holder was an ignorant "cracker" who had made money in tobacco during the war, and who evidently had trusted the credit of the Durkee name without troubling to examine the bonds.

All of the above was known in advance of the funeral. Helen had decided that Edward Durkee, though a suicide and a criminal, was not to be denied a place in the family vault, which was about a hundred years old and was, by the way, the only vault in our local cemetery. There could be no church service, of course. Four old men neighbors and myself were to be the sole mourners, in addition to the women of the family.

Burial in a vault is a simple proposition. The key was sent to the sexton in the morning, and all he had to do was to throw open the bronze doors. He performed this task after the procession had started from the house.

It then occurred to him to descend into the interior and burn some sulphur, for the purpose of purifying the air. The result was a gruesome discovery that sent him fleeing back to the opening, where he greeted us, his face chalky-white and his legs trembling.

He signalled to me to step aside. "For the Lord's sake, keep the women folk from going into that vault!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Why, what's the matter?" I gasped.

"The Durkee coffins are tumbled all over the place. Not one of 'em is laying where it was set."

"Grave robbers?" I shuddered at my own words.

"I don't think so. The lids of the coffins ain't been lifted. It's just that they've been tossed every which way."

"You'll have to show me," I said. It sounded like madhouse talk to me.

I was obliged to admit a few minutes later that a horrible and inexplicable thing had taken place.

TWENTY-THREE bodies had been laid to rest in that vault. They had been arranged in rows of eight each, with a vacant space at the end of the last row for Edward Durkee. Five of the older coffins were of oak, which had begun to crumble away. Eight were of lead. The ten most recent ones were of bronze.

All had been displaced. But, whereas the wooden coffins had been merely shifted slightly, the metal ones were scattered here and there. This fantastic detail literally froze my heart. I looked at a ponderous leaden coffin standing on end, head down, at another lying over on its side, a third tilted against the steps that led from the outside world, a fourth balanced across one of its fellows, and I could not imagine for the life of me what force had moved them.

They did not bear a single mark such as human ghouls would have made with hammer and chisel if they had tried to violate them. The screws had not been touched.

The hideous fantasy flashed through my mind that the coffins looked as if the bodies inside them had come to life, and that they had possessed the strength to hurl themselves around and set the coffins to dancing.

I returned above ground, told Helen briefly what had happened and persuaded her to take the women away. Then, with the men of the party as witnesses and with the aid of some workmen employed by the cemetery, the sexton and I restored all the coffins to their proper places.

The wretched Edward Durkee was also laid away. We examined the vault carefully, satisfied ourselves that it had not been broken into and finally locked the massive bronze doors.

THE ensuing week was a tragic period for us all. The creditor who held the promissory note Helen had signed lost no time in serving notice that he would go to law if it was not redeemed the day it fell due.

This creditor's name was Joshua Brown, and being of poor-white parentage he seemed to take a malignant satisfaction in threatening the destruction of the last vestige of an old family pride. The Durkee home would be attached and sold at auction—at the very least. It was possible that the criminal charge to be brought against Helen might result in a jail sentence.

I was powerless to help her. The $20,000 needed to

DANCING Coffins

about except by vault—and the vault

By George Brookhart

"For the Lord's sake, keep the women folk from going into that vault!" he whispered hoarsely

cancel the note loomed as big as a million dollars to me.

To add to our misery, the most outrageous rumors had started to fly around town. It had been impossible to prevent the cemetery employees from gossiping, and the tale of the jumbled coffins had been given a sinister twist. It was said that the ghosts of the Durkee ancestors had brought about the phenomenon as a protest against the burial of a suicide and embezzler among them. I'll admit it began to look that way—even to me.

A more crude variation of the gossip had it that the vault had been pillaged by grave robbers, and that we were lying when we declared the coffins were intact. If the reader knows anything about the prejudices of a backwoods Southern town, he'll realize that this created a public opinion of loathing mixed with pity concerning the girls, which was more difficult to endure than the accusation of crime.

I was almost crazy with worry when there occurred a development I shall not forget as long as I live.

The cemetery is at the east end of Bridgeville, and recently a sort of suburb has sprung up beyond it. Henry Cullom, my superior at the bank, owns one of the best of

the new houses in Bridgeville's handsome new addition.

I had occasion to visit Mr. Cullom on the seventh evening after the Durkee funeral. My flivver was out of commission, and I proposed to walk. By taking a short cut across the cemetery, I could save half a mile. This I proceeded to do as a matter of course, tombstones never having been objects of terror to me. My pride did not permit me to take the mystery of the Durkee caskets into account.

There was no moon, but Venus was at her brightest and I noticed that my body cast a faint shadow. Starlight is far more weird than moonlight. I shuddered involuntarily at the misty outlines of the headstones and crosses, emerging in the soft radiance. But I was not scared.

MY path led straight by the Durkee vault. I stopped and stared at its portico, obeying an impulse I could not explain. I saw nothing peculiar and was about to pass on when, directly under my feet as it seemed, I heard a muffled thud.

My scalp tingled. I moved sideways with a crazy, stumbling motion. The thudding had started again. It sounded like the noise of packing cases being turned over and over in a cellar. The effect was blood-curdling, in view of the fact that a week earlier my eyes had given me material proof that the bronze and lead coffins in the vault had been thrown around by unseen forces.

We suffered mental anguish such as I hope will never be repeated for us in this lifetime—waiting for those coffins to dance!

I confess without shame that I was panic-stricken and took to my heels. The beaten path across the cemetery was all too narrow for me. I bumped against the edges of tombs as I went wildly astray, and once my feet became entangled in the roots of a shrub and I was sent sprawling. I had run at least a quarter of a mile before I regained a grip upon my nerves and halted in spite of my terror.

"You're not a child. You're a grown man—not a child," I repeated over and over to myself. "Whatever's happening in that vault concerns Helen, and you've got to check up on it."

I turned around and walked unsteadily back. The phenomenon of the subterranean noises was continuing unabated.

I got down on my hands and knees and placed my ear to the ground. This enabled me to gauge the sounds more clearly. Most, if not all, of the coffins were rolling and dancing. It was out of the question to believe that human beings were manipulating them. Living men would not have been strong enough to turn them over as rapidly as they were being turned.

I arose and forced myself to approach the door of the vault. I examined the padlock and assured myself that it had not been tampered with. An instant later, I had ceased to cling to the least hope of proving that an everyday, material influence was at work. For, behind the grill of the upper part of the door, a pale cloud suddenly floated.

I thought I made out the face of a woman, but it was only a flash and I could not have described the features. The cloud passed clear through the door, enveloped me briefly as in a chilling fog and then vanished. The effect was more weird than if it had faded slowly.

I escaped from the cemetery as best I could without yielding to another panic of fright. To affirm my self control, I proceeded to Henry Cullom's house and conducted my business with him. Of course I did not tell him what I had experienced.

The next morning, I visited the vault in the company of the sexton. It was an anti-climax, as far as I was concerned, to find that the coffins were even more grotesquely displaced than they had been the last time. But the sexton was so frightened that he bolted out of the place and I had difficulty in dragging him back to lend me a hand in restoring order.

The longer I thought about the matter, the surer I felt that I should take Helen fully into my confidence, despite her other troubles. I had (*Continued on page* 64)

The SPIRIT Quarterback

Only a miracle could save Evandale from inglorious defeat on the gridiron. Then came—the Spirit Quarterback

By Ralph Barton — *Told by* Emil Raymond

THE story came back to me again last night in all its vividness and mystery, just as it has always done since that memorable Thanksgiving many years ago.

We were gathered once again at the University Club, we varsity men of the Evandale teams of former days. It is an old custom at Evandale, this getting together once a year of the football men of the past. It always occurs on the day of the Barrington game, when the whole college goes mad in the playing of that historic contest.

Alumni from all parts of the country attend that game. And especially for the men who have faced Barrington in former years it is an event not to be lightly missed. I liked the old custom, and have always made it a point to be there even after sixteen years. Except, of course, 1917 and '18. Those are the only years I've missed.

AND always on those occasions my thoughts go back to the famous Evandale-Barrington game of 1910 in which I won my letter. I have it yet—the heavy white sweater with the crimson "E" that I waited nearly four years to win. And then, after all, was it really mine? Was I really entitled to wear it? The thought has come to me often, and many a time at our reunions I've had to make a deliberate effort to keep from rising in my place and telling the whole story. But the boys would only say I was crazy; that I'm getting old and senile.

Yet last night I realized that we are getting old, all of us. For when I got up as I've done each year to repeat the toast, "And here, fellows, is one to Flash Dunham, God rest his soul!" one or two of the boys had questioning looks on their faces as they raised their glasses. They didn't quite recall Flash Dunham!

So I decided then and there to tell the story of Flash Dunham and that Barrington game of sixteen years ago, so that men of mature age and understanding judgment can weigh the evidence and form their own conclusions. For myself, I do not attempt to explain it or to give reasons. I cannot even account for my own impressions at the time. I only know that I can recall what happened with the utmost vividness; and that what I here set down is the whole truth as I saw it.

It was my good fortune during my junior year at Evandale to room with Flash Dunham, one of the greatest quarterbacks the game has ever produced. I could handle the ball pretty well myself, and ever since I entered college I had worked out regularly each fall with the team.

But there had never been any hope of my making the Varsity. I was scarcely five feet six, and I never weighed more than 145. Those were the days before the open game and the forward pass, and a man had to be rugged to stand the battering of a college game. No coach would give a second thought to me, and it was only at intervals, when the substitutes had had a trying day, that I was sent in to run through the signals for the scrubs. But I loved the game, and my loyalty to Evandale was supreme. And I kept coming out for practise year after year.

That's how I met Flash Dunham. From his first appearance on the field in his freshman year it was certain that he was to be the regular quarter. His speed was what gave him his name. He was built like a race-horse, and his stamina was that of a thoroughbred. In headwork he was faultless, and throughout the memorable years that he led Evandale to victory he amazed not only our opponents but our own coaches by solving plays before they were launched; by breaking up intricate attacks; by actually, it seemed, reading the minds of the opposing players. He was a genius at football.

My friendship for Flash Dunham was more than the mere fellowship of the football field. There was a real understanding between us that went deeper than surface interests. If Flash felt indisposed for any reason, I myself was out of sorts. When he was roused by anything, I found that I too had the same sensations of joy or anger or excitement. He taught me all I knew of football, and I absorbed the theory of the game with avidity, for it brought me closer than ever to Flash.

"You'll make the Varsity yet, Barton!" he would say with enthusiasm. "You know as much now about the inside game as I do."

But I would only laugh, for it was out of the question. Next to Flash himself was Bill Stecher, a fast and brainy player, who was the regular substitute. Then came a string of men who had more qualifications to make the team than I. So game after game I sat on the sidelines seeing other men go in, and actually hoping that it would never come my turn. For if it was necessary to send me in, it would mean that Evandale was bad off indeed.

SO the final year came with Flash going better than ever and Evandale rolling up the enormous scores that had come to be expected of it. Barrington too, was showing greater strength than ever, and we knew that they were holding everything back for the final game with Evandale. They had always put up their best battle against us and this year they were truly formidable, with giants on the line and speed to burn back of it.

Excitement was at a high pitch long before the middle of November. The only thing that dulled my enthusiasm even a trifle was that this was my last year at Evandale,

and I had never taken part in a single game. In justice to the team I knew there could be no other way. But as the weeks drew to an end it seemed a little hard just the same. Flash Dunham knew what was in my mind, though I never spoke of it.

"YOU'VE got to get in the Barrington game, Barton, if only for a minute," he said heatedly. "You've been coming out for the team for four years and you're a better man than any sub we've got. If only you carried a little more weight!" he added regretfully.

I only laughed. "Not a chance of their putting me in against Barrington! Those fellows average two hundred pounds on the hoof!"

Flash Dunham growled, and insisted that he would take the matter up with the head coach. It was a shame, he said, that I couldn't get my letter. He'd see that I had a chance to play.

But the Delford game came and went, and although my heart beat wildly every time the coach cast his eye in my direction, I was not called upon to go in. I had no heart for the merry-making that followed our victory over Delford. Most of the scrubs broke training that night. It would make little difference with only one more game left to play. In those days training rules were not very sacred anyhow. But I kept to my room, not even wanting to hear the consoling words of Flash Dunham. I threw myself on the couch with a book to while away an hour or two before bed. It had been a strenuous day for me, and before I knew it I was asleep.

I awoke with a cry ringing in my ears. Startled out of a deep slumber as I was, there was still no mistaking that cry. It was Flash Dunham's voice. But standing there in the dark, I had no idea of where the sound had come from. I threw open the hall door, but everything was still and quiet. I thrust my head out the window, but not a soul was in sight—the last straggler had left the college street.

I glanced at my watch. It was just past three o'clock. Flash Dunham had not come in. Where could he be? It was beyond all thinking that he should make a night of it with the Barrington game still ahead. And that sharp, piercing cry that still rang in my ears—where had it come from?

I stepped cautiously into the hall. Perhaps he was spending the night with one of the other fellows on the floor. But as I paused at each door there was no sound. No light shone through any of the keyholes. The whole dormitory was deep in slumber.

I returned to my room, troubled and filled with foreboding. True enough, the sound that I had heard might have been an unconscious cry from someone asleep on the floor. But I could not rid myself of the notion that it was Flash whom I had heard. I sat up for an hour with my thoughts. Then sleep again began to creep over me—and I put out the lights.

Morning was well advanced when I was awakened by a rapping on the door. Jerry McQuade, captain of the team, stood there with a queer, half-dazed look on his face. Before he spoke, I knew what was coming. Strangely enough too, he seemed to realize that I knew.

He came into the room without a word and slumped into a chair. We sat that way looking at each other for some moments. It never oc-

Was it chance—or some unseen power—that had sent the ball flying into my arms?

curred to me to question him. Then he spoke in a hushed voice.

"You'll have to get his things together, Barton. They'll be sure to want all his junk."

I nodded. "What was it, Jerry?" I managed to ask.

"An automobile. Dillon got hold of it somewhere, and Flash went along. They hit a tree on the Marysville road."

"Do you know what time it happened?"

"Three o'clock. A farmer picked them up and got them to a hospital in Marysville. But Flash was done for. He never had a chance."

SO that was what I had heard—Flash Dunham's last cry on earth. It did not surprise me at the time that I had heard it, although the poor fellow must have been at least thirty miles away. I simply took it for granted that when Flash cried out in agony I would hear it—so close were the bonds between us.

Later, when the body had been brought back to Evandale, we learned more of the details. Flash had been alive and conscious when placed on the operating table at the hospital, and he had struggled to make his final words heard. The surgeon had taken them down as they had been uttered. My feelings may better be imagined than described when I learned that he had thought last of me.

"The big game," Flash had murmured in his dying moments,—"tell them to put Barton in."

That was all—a thought of the eternal friendship between us, and the hope that I would make my letter. But for myself, the passing of Flash Dunham had left a gap that nothing could replace. I had no interest in my studies or even in the game that was to come. Had it not been for his parting words I would have turned in my uniform. But I knew Flash would want me to stick it out. So I did. But the spirit had gone out of my work. There was no ginger in my stride, no snap in my voice. The coaches understood, and said nothing.

But with the rest of the team it was different. You know how the best trained army falls apart when the leader falls? The change that had come over the Evandale eleven was startling. True, the boys went through the motions. They had not forgotten the drill that came from years of playing together. But the pep and the punch that had carried them to three years of victory were gone. They handled the ball like men in a trance. In vain the coaches roared and shouted and yanked man after man from the line. It did no good. A pall had fallen on the team. Even throughout the college it didn't seem to matter. Flash Dunham was gone. The mere playing of the game was empty without him.

Yet there was the Barrington game still to be faced, and the coaches were in despair. In their present condition, Evandale would simply go to pieces before that crushing, vicious attack. The game was scheduled for Thanksgiving Day on our own grounds, but when Tuesday's practise had passed into history without any change in the men, we were ready to give up all for lost. (*Continued on page 77*)

There were two Barrington men between me and the goal

The MYSTERY of

"I am marked for timely end.

Photograph of Harry Houdini, celebrated magician, taken a short time before his death

THERE is a mystery in the death of Houdini.

Behind the collapse of the great magician on the stage of his theater in Detroit, and his death a week later, there is a weird story, with many elements that may well cause the world of skeptics to wonder.

In the death of this arch-skeptic there may be a profound lesson against skepticism.

For weeks before he died, his death was positively predicted.

The newspapers published the obvious facts of his accident, his tragic death, his burial. They told how he was about to perform his famous water cell escape trick in an Albany theater, when a part of the apparatus fell and broke his leg. In spite of the injury, and against the advice of his physicians, he continued to appear in his complete evening's entertainment of magic, mystery, escapes and pseudo-spiritualism, the season of which was just beginning.

When I read of this accident in the papers I sent a wire of condolence to Houdini, with whom I had been friends for nearly twenty years. I told him I hoped the injury would not prove serious or stop his tour.

A few days later I received a humorous letter from him. I had sent the telegram to Albany, and meanwhile Houdini had taken his show to Schenectady. The telegram had been forwarded from the one town to the other and Houdini had to pay the extra charge. He was humorously indignant at having to pay the charges in a telegram of sympathy for his injured leg.

Meanwhile, the Houdini show had moved to Montreal. Physicians there strenuously advised against the conjurer continuing his public performances until his leg was healed. But Houdini was adamant. He went right on. Conflicting stories are told of what happened in Montreal. One story has it that a newspaperman in a friendly encounter punched him in the side, and that it was as a result of this unintended injury the great enchanter died.

At all events, Houdini moved his show from Montreal to Detroit. Once more physicians tried to prevail upon him to cancel his engagements. Once more he refused. While appearing in Detroit, *he collapsed on the stage* (the italics are the author's) and was taken to a bed in a hospital, from which he never rose again as a living man.

Houdini, who denied that spirits ever returned from the borderland of death, was himself beyond that borderland at last.

Such are the facts, most of which have been told most sympathetically by the newspapers that had chronicled his spectacular career for many years.

But they are not all the facts.

I believe that I am in possession of certain information that is known to but few others, if, indeed, it is known to anyone at all. Because of the remarkable nature of this information, and because some of it seems too incredible to be true, I shall be most circumspect and circumstantial in its narration. If, therefore, I seem to dwell upon unimportant details I ask the reader's patience, because of the immense importance of this subject.

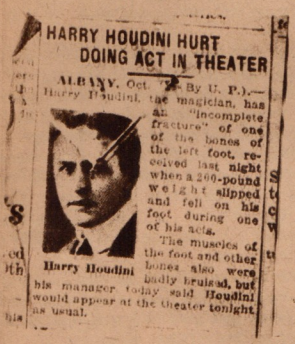
I shall begin at the beginning.

Earlier in the autumn, just before Houdini left for the opening of his tour, in Boston, he called my house on the telephone, one Saturday afternoon. In a few hours he was to leave on his trip. I was not at home when he called, and he asked my wife most impressively to have me call

HOUDINI'S Death

death," said Houdini hardly a month before his un-
How could the spirits know, unless—

By Samri Frikell



HARRY HOUDINI HURT DOING ACT IN THEATER

ALBANY, Oct. [illegible] By U. P.).—Harry Houdini, the magician, has an "incomplete fracture" of one of the bones of the left foot, received last night when a 200-pound weight slipped and fell on his foot during one of his acts.

The muscles of the foot and other bones also were badly bruised, but his manager today said Houdini would appear at the theater tonight as usual.

Harry Houdini

Dear Sir

October 13, 1926

Three years ago Dr. Hyslop said to J. Malcolm Bird, of the Psychical Research Society, The values are black for Houdini. and he predicted that disaster would befall him while performing before an audience in a theatre. Dr Hyslop now says that the injury is more serious than has been reported and that Houdini's days as a magician are over.

Very truly, Alice A. Wood

Reproduction of the letter written by the medium, Mrs. Wood, to Samri Frikell

him at the first opportunity as the matter was important.

I later met my wife at a hotel on Broadway near Seventy-second Street in New York, and she gave me the message. Immediately I telephoned Houdini on the secret telephone he used, the number of which was known only to his friends.

"Helloa! Samri Frikell," he said. "I am going away and I want to tell you a piece of news."

"What is that?" I asked.

"You know my detective system?" he said.

I did know it. Houdini employed a most comprehensive espionage system covering the entire United States in his long battle against fraudulent spiritualism. Some of these detectives were members of churches and of "circles."

"I am now a marked man," he continued.

"A marked man—marked for what?" I asked.

"I am marked for death," he replied solemnly.

I laughed. The idea seemed too absurd, too preposterous. Houdini was an athlete; he seemed in the prime of his strength and vigor; and the idea that he might be attacked by his enemies seemed utterly unreasonable.

"Do you mean to say," I gasped, "that you think you are going to be murdered."

He hesitated as if weighing the words of his answer.

"No, I don't mean that," he said at last. "I mean that they are predicting my death in spirit circles, all over the country."

I could detect by the tone in his voice that he felt badly about it. And then I remembered that his recent foe, "Margery," the celebrated Boston medium, had predicted that he would die on December 25, 1925. At that time, Houdini had replied, "I might die on December 25, 1925, but if I do, it will be a coincidence."

"You don't put any stock in it, do you?" I inquired.

He said he did not, but, nevertheless, he admitted that it had made an impression on his mind.

"BUT that is not all I wanted to tell you," he continued. "They are beginning to take notice of you."

"Of me?" I repeated.

"Yes. The fake mediums are circulating your picture and your biography all over the United States."

"How do you know that?"

"I have a copy of the data they are sending out about you," Houdini assured me. "When (*Continued on page 56*)

Pawn of the Unseen

By Lyon Mearson

WHEN Martin Grimm who in life was both deaf and dumb, was found dead in a chair with a telephone receiver in his hand, those who found the body were naturally puzzled. It appeared to be a case of murder. It could have been suicide, perhaps. But someone had to be found to blame it onto.

Lenore, Grimm's beautiful young niece, was suspected.

Terry Lenihan, his neighbor, a wealthy young bachelor, was suspected.

Blood, his butler, was suspected.

But nothing was found out. The coroner called it a case of death from natural causes and the body was prepared for burial.

Then began the series of astounding manifestations of the supernatural that followed fast, one upon another, in that house of death—apparently warnings from the spirit world directed at Terry and his valet, Marius, who were trying to solve the mystery of Grimm's death, to keep "hands off."

Entering the death chamber after an all night investigation, the two men approach the coffin in which Grimm was placed, in order to take a last look at the strange old recluse, before leaving.

It was Terry who lifted the silk covering. Then as the two gazed at what was underneath, their faces blanched.

"My God!" breathed Terry.

IN that tremendous instant everything around Terry went dark and hazy, and his swimming senses refused the feeble promptings of his brain for their functioning. His face became pale as sculptor's clay—pale as the death cast, and his eyes could scarcely credit what they saw.

"Lenore!"

For there, lying where he had expected to see the pale and composed face of Martin Grimm, slain in his own house, was the slim and inanimate form of Lenore.

There she lay, her body pale and white and still in her slim white dress, inert and moveless. And to the ears of Terry and Marius came the gentle snore of the watcher beside the bier . . . the paid mourner who had slept through it all.

The quick eye of Marius caught the slash of scarlet paper that lay across her breast. It read:

> Beware! As she is now, so will you be. This is not a warning—this is an example. You are marked for the grave!
>
> THE SEVEN.

The old watcher at the coffin of Martin Grimm stirred uneasily in his slumber.

Terry shook him roughly and pointed to the body of Lenore, lying in the coffin where that of Martin Grimm had been.

The gaze of the old man followed his, and no question was necessary on his part.

"How did this come about?" queried Marius, sternly.

When he recovered his breath, the old man shook his head.

"I dunno," he said. "Is she dead?"

Marius nodded. "I think so. How did she come to be here—in place of the body you were supposed to be watching?"

"I dunno," said the old man again. "Strange things goes on in my bizness. I only bin sleepin' a short time—about a hour, I guess. Musta happened while I wuz asleep."

He creaked upward from his chair, and placed his hand upon the heart of Lenore, who lay so silent and so beautiful. Terry felt a desire to stop him, but it was an instinctive feeling, for he realized that this man knew death better than he did, and that this touch was inquiring, not profane.

There was a long silence—eight or ten seconds—while the old grave watcher bent his grizzled head to her heart. Finally he straightened up, a faint smile on his lips.

Terry looked at him enquiringly, then as if in protest at his slowness of response, impulsively raised the girl against his arm, while he and Marius gazed steadfastly into her pale face, searching for some sign of life.

"SHE ain't dead," said the old man. "Her heart's beatin'. Just unconscious. Nasty blow she got on the head—that knocks ya out that way, sometimes. Better carry 'er upstairs to a bedroom, an' we'll see what we kin do to bring 'er to."

Electrified, Marius and Terry took her form gently out of its enclosing coffin, and the three of them started up the stairs, the two who carried Lenore going first, followed by the old man, who shook his head and mumbled to himself at the things that go on in the chambers of the dead.

As they made their way up the stairs, from somewhere deep in the house there came to them the flat, padding footsteps that they had heard before in this house. The footsteps receded into the distance . . . the distance that was, perhaps, another world . . . and the spirits of Marius and Terry quivered within them.

Terry imagined he felt the body of Lenore growing warm in his arms. They turned at the head of the stairs and made their way into the black and gold bedroom that Lenore had used while she lived in this strange place.

Gently they laid her upon the bed. The old man took a flask from his pocket, poured some of the contents into a glass that stood on the bedside table, and forced the liquid between the pale lips.

As the three bent over her, her eyelids fluttered. She opened her luminous orbs and looked straight at Terry.

"Terry," she said faintly, and a slight smile shaded its way crookedly over her face. "What's happened?"

The old man, seeing that he was no longer to be useful here, made his way out of the room quietly, and went downstairs.

"You're in your own room, Lenore," said Terry. "How do you feel?"

"All right, except that I have a sort of burning sensation inside of me."

"That's the booze," said Marius. "That's what woke you up."

"HAVE I been sleeping?" she asked. "Strange—I cannot seem to remember what I was doing before I went to sleep."

"Where were you?"

She paused for a moment, as though trying to recall.

"I . . . don't . . . think . . . I . . . know . . ." she replied slowly, pausing between her words as if trying to grasp at some fugitive memory even while she spoke.

"Try to remember," urged Terry kindly. "Was it in this house?"

She thought for a moment. Then her face assumed a bit of recollection.

"I think so, dear," she said simply, and at the endearment

Terry and Marius investigate the casket that contained old Grimm, and find in it—Lenore! Who would want to steal the dead? And where in that house of mystery could old Grimm be?

"She ain't dead," said the old man. "Her heart's beatin'."

Terry felt a warm glow course through him, enlivening his faculties and energizing his limbs.

"Was it—now think hard—was it on the top floor, in your uncle's garret?" he asked quietly.

Recollection broke through finally at this, and Terry felt that he would never forget the expression of fear that appeared in her face at the thought.

"Oh, Terry! Terry! I remember . . . I remember——" She gulped a great sob that tore at Terry's heart-strings.

He took her two hands in his, tenderly, and soothed her.

"There there, Lenore. Don't be afraid any more. Nothing is going to happen to you from now on."

In a few moments she was quieted, and had resumed her wonted calm.

"Do you think you can tell me about it now, Lenore?"

"There is nothing much to tell."

He was bathing the wound above her ear with some water which he had poured out of the carafe at the bedside. It was not deep, though it had unquestionably bled profusely.

"I know, Lenore, but that bad wound over your ear——"

"Well, all I know is that I went into the studio——" She was quiet for an instant before resuming, . . . "and he seized me as I entered and I struggled and was hit on the head. When I woke I was tied, my head was lying in a pool of blood and he was standing over me. I fainted dead away, and here I am."

"Did you scream before fainting?" asked Marius.

"Yes, I did. I remember now. I screamed, and when I woke you were here."

"Do you know who struck you?"

"I don't know. He was just someone who was there," she responded a trifle wearily.

"I don't want to tire you, Lenore, but what were you doing in the studio at that time?"

"I was——"

Her voice was cut off by a hoarse, frightened shout from downstairs—from the chamber where the body of Martin Grimm had been. The men looked at each other in astonishment.

"It's the watcher!" gasped Marius.

It had been a cry of fear. Something terrible was going on downstairs.

Lenore was evidently all right by now, as they both assured themselves with a glance.

"I'm going down, Lenore," said Terry briefly. "You'll be all right?"

She nodded.

"I'll be right back," he said, making for the door as he spoke.

Followed by Marius he dashed down the stairs at breakneck speed, and into the chamber where the empty bier was.

There stood the old watcher of the dead, his face drawn in its astonishment, his mouth open with the involuntary cry of fear that had been drawn from him, and his hand clutching at the back of a chair for support.

The coffin was no longer empty!

There, in its accustomed place, was the body of Martin Grimm, lying as though it had never been away.

"Look!" gasped Terry. "That face!"

TERRY and Marius glanced at each other quickly, to make sure that they both saw the same thing. The startled look in the eyes of each assured the other that he was not alone in seeing what was in the coffin.

"Well, we will certainly be damned!" said Terry, with heartfelt astonishment.

"This is really the funniest thing I ever saw!" burst forth from Marius.

"Funny?"

"I mean peculiar," Marius corrected himself.

"Queer goin's on, here," mumbled the old man. They turned to him.

"How did this happen?" demanded Terry.

The old man shook his head. "You askin' me?" he inquired. "I don't know no more about it than you. All I knows is that when I come back into the room here, there wuz dat body layin' there lookin' as natural as ever it wuz."

They examined the room carefully, but could find no trace of what had occurred, and finally turned to each other mystified.

"I'm not going to stir out of this house until I know what it's all about," said Terry.

As if in answer, there was that distant, blood-curdling laughter that they were almost getting used to in this house. This time it seemed to them to be coming from upstairs—from the part of the house they had just quitted—from the place where Lenore still was.

They woke to this fact with a start, even as the echo of the laughter was subsiding in their ears.

Lenore was still up there. And something else was there . . . something . . . some power. . .

With one mind they turned and dashed for the stairs, going up as quickly as they had dashed down a few minutes before. They burst through the door into the room where they had left the pale Lenore.

She was gone!

"My God!" Terry exclaimed. "I felt at the time that I should not have left her!"

To their ears again came the sound of that unearthly laughter they had learned to know and to recognize.

Terry drew his Colt's automatic from his pocket, and a hard, grim line set itself around his handsome mouth. He was a man outraged in his love and in his egotism—a man's two most vulnerable points. He was a dangerous man from that time on.

"We'll continue our search," he said quietly "—and it's going to include the cellar this time. Come on, follow me."

Steadily, with no attempt at concealment, which they now realized would be useless, they made their way down the stairs, and in an instant they stood once more outside the door of the room where lay the body of Martin Grimm, watched over by the peculiar looking old man with one ear. They stood outside this door for a moment, listening for any sounds from the inside. There were none.

"Peculiar, how that body came back again," ventured Marius. "Whoever it is must be strong as a bull, to be able to cart a body around as quickly as that."

"Yes, whoever did that was certainly no ghost," admitted Terry, with another glance at the closed door. He put his hand on the door knob, turned it and pushed inward.

In the center was the bier, with guttering candles at each

corner, and clothed in the dignity of death was the body of Martin Grimm, as though he had never moved from the place.

But the chair where the professional mourner had sat was empty, and he was nowhere to be seen in the room.

"Old Funnyface is gone," said Marius.

"You mean that you think he was taken?" inquired Terry.

"Well, something of that was in my mind," conceded Marius.

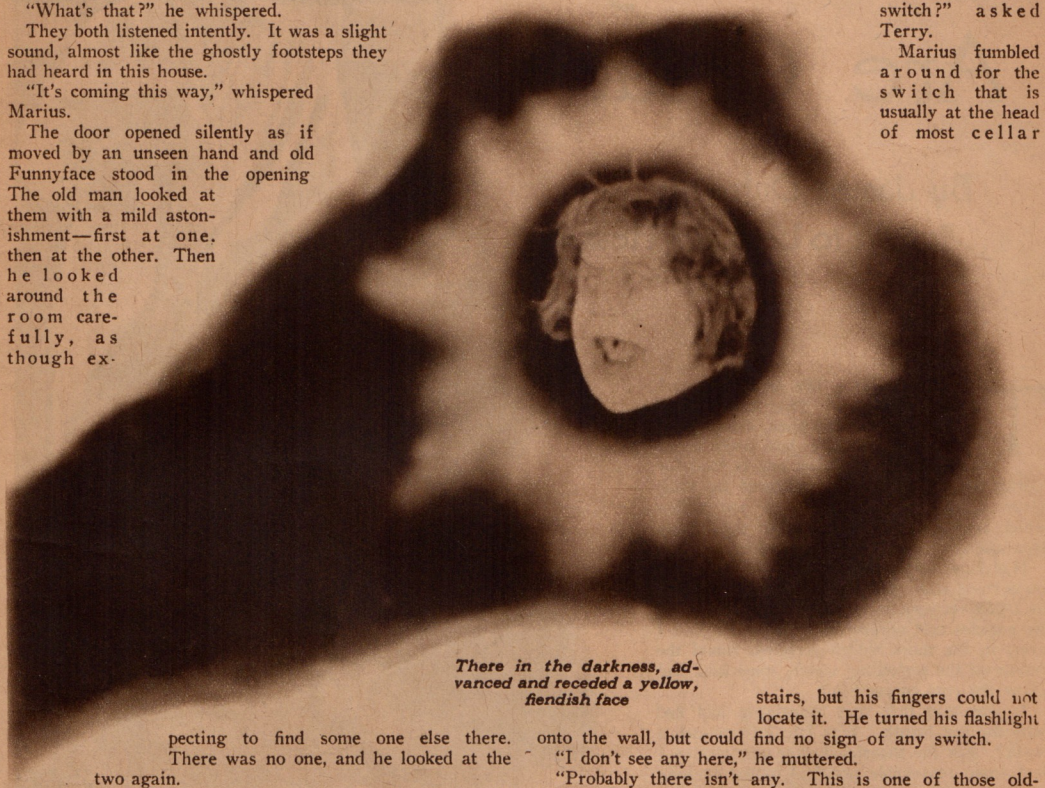
Terry paused, his head bent in a listening attitude. He had heard a sound outside the door.

"What's that?" he whispered.

They both listened intently. It was a slight sound, almost like the ghostly footsteps they had heard in this house.

"It's coming this way," whispered Marius.

The door opened silently as if moved by an unseen hand and old Funnyface stood in the opening The old man looked at them with a mild astonishment—first at one, then at the other. Then he looked around the room carefully, as though expecting to find some one else there. There was no one, and he looked at the two again.



There in the darkness, advanced and receded a yellow, fiendish face

"Didn't one of youse open the door for me?"

He gazed at them in astonishment. They shook their heads, and Terry replied:

"No, we've been standing right here—nowhere near the door."

"I didn't open that 'ar door. One of youse opened it. What yer tryin' t'do, kid me?" He paused, then added belligerently: "I'm gettin' too old fer that kinda stuff!"

Terry and Marius looked at each other in amazement.

It was Terry who spoke first. "Another one of their tricks, I guess."

"It is," agreed Marius. He turned to the ancient with one ear.

"Where've you been?" he demanded, not unkindly.

"Washin' my hands, if it's all the same to you. A habit I contracted in my youth, gents."

He turned from them and took his place in the chair next to the bier of Martin Grimm.

Over his head Marius and Terry looked at each other and almost laughed, although they were very far from being in a hilarious or merry mood.

As they turned to go, Terry paused and spoke to the old man:

"Keep your eyes open this time, will you? There have been some pretty peculiar things happening around here——"

"Has there?" asked the old man. "I didn't notice."

"Well, just see that the body you're supposed to be watching stays right where it is," warned Terry, and the two men went out of the door of the death chamber.

The descent into the lower part of the house was familiar to them, as they had made their entrance through the basement, by way of the kitchen. There was, at the end of the basement hall, a dark stairway leading into the cellar—one that was seldom used, as they could see by the cobwebs.

"Can you find the switch?" asked Terry.

Marius fumbled around for the switch that is usually at the head of most cellar stairs, but his fingers could not locate it. He turned his flashlight onto the wall, but could find no sign of any switch.

"I don't see any here," he muttered.

"Probably there isn't any. This is one of those old-fashioned houses that were piped for gas first, and later wired for electricity. Come on, we'll use our flashlights. Perhaps there is a bulb in the cellar."

TERRY leading the way, they walked down the narrow stairs leading into the cellar. At the foot of the stairs they came up against a blank door. Terry pushed it, and got nowhere for the effort, for it appeared to be locked.

"Looks as if it's locked," he muttered.

"Let me at it," requested Marius, and Terry squeezed up against the wall to let Marius crowd in where he could manipulate the lock. It was no use—it was a spring lock, and it was snapped shut.

"Now what?" asked Terry, flashing his light on the lock.

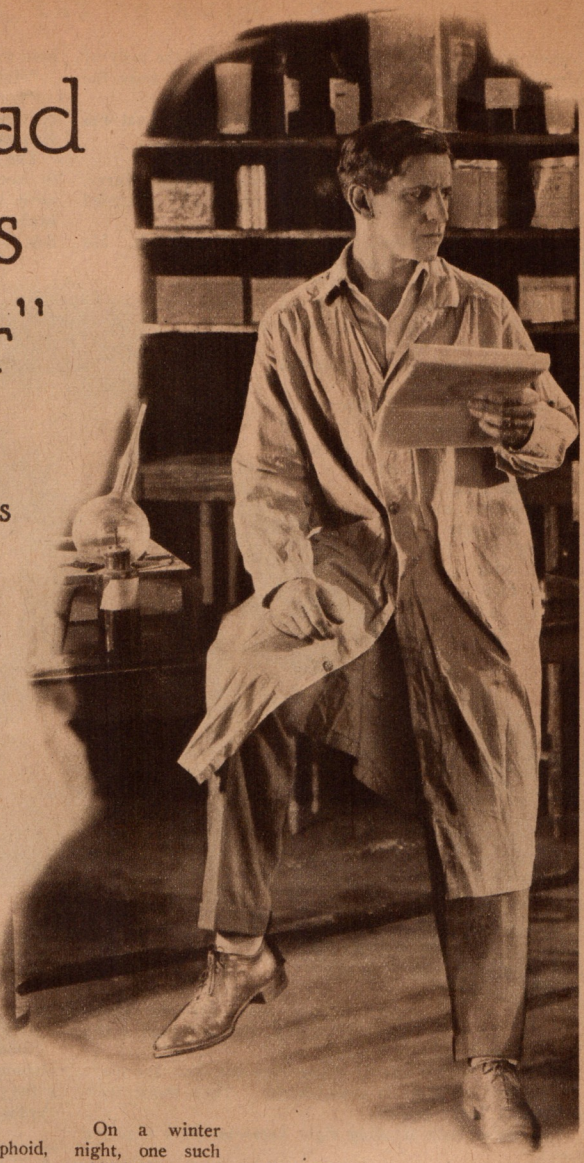
"Simple enough," said Marius, taking out the cold-chisel they had used during the night to effect an entrance into the kitchen.

It was just a wooden door, although the lock was a strong one, and Marius inserted the chisel into a crack, secured a good leverage, and pushed down hard. In an instant the door flew open, lock and catch and chain hanging useless as it swung inward.

The cellar in front of them was pitch black, and a damp smell came to their nostrils—the (*Continued on page 91*)

"To the Dead All Things Are Clear"

By James Dufrey,
As told to Leonard Hess



THAT there is a life beyond this, I would not believe. That this body of flesh and blood and bone, this mechanism which, after a few years under ground, falls into dust and is food for worms and dissolution, is animated by some force, spirit, soul—call it what you will—which continues its existence after the earthly envelope is corrupted—that I would not credit.

Had I not often laid such a stark, dead body on a stone slab, and with a scalpel discovered its secret recesses, stripped its bones and bared its muscles and nerves and fibres—and had I ever, in the most hidden recesses, found the retreat of the something which, some said, had given the cold corpse life?

It was said that that Something had fled with the last breath. Was I to believe such a myth? For the theories I gave out, always I had some reasonable proof. I stated nothing as fact which, in my laboratory, I had not checked.

I have dissected many a poor body. No, not as a medical student—I am a bacteriologist.

I have seen in my test-tubes the deadly germs of typhoid, of tuberculosis, of countless dread maladies that strike men down to disease and death. I have seen these micro-organisms, malignantly wriggling under my lenses. I could have displayed them to those who believed so firmly in a life to come, and I could have said:

"Here—look! This is the beginning and the end. This is all there is to it. See, for instance, these streptococci. The flesh they enter turns in a few days to decay. I know it is so. I am showing you this. What have you, in return, to show me, of those future spheres you speak of?"

I WAS incurring a hundred dangers from infection—to what end? To aid the flesh so that it might escape illness and remain a little longer on this earth. Yet there were those who scoffed at my science, telling me that no man can know the truth, that science is a half-truth—if it is worth anything at all—while they gabbed on about their ghosts and apparitions and voices and manifestations, and what not!

On a winter night, one such rabid believer, my excellent friend, Fuller, regaled me with such discourse into the late hours. He cited instances of his "other world" from Flammarion, Lodge, Doyle, and a dozen others. He read to me from their books to convince me that this world is not all—that we live again in the hereafter.

"It isn't a matter of faith, either," he said. "It's an established fact."

We sat in my study. Outside, a snow storm raged among the hills, and icy blasts rattled the windows. The fire leaped redly up and down the chimney. I liked Fuller immensely, and so I listened.

I could see he was annoyed by my disbelief. Presently, at about two in the morning, he left me to go to bed, and I sat alone before the fire, not thinking of the unbelievable tales I had heard, but of a delicate experiment I was to perform on the morrow.

I must have drowsed before the warmth of the flames. Fuller, I am sure, had shut the study door behind him.

"No," she said, "he wrote it after he died."

Who but the dead can write a treatise on life after death? Yet—how can the dead write? Doctor Dufrey is faced with an astounding problem

Yet when I raised my eyes, I saw that door, standing open. I set it down to the wind.

Then I became aware that my thoughts had been of a mingled sort. With musings on my experiment and my work in general, had been mixed reminiscences of my father, whose kindness had made my career possible. I had thought of my mother, too, who had sat in silent dreams so often before this very fireplace.

And then, through that open door, came—shall I call it a light, a refulgence—a shape? No, it was my mother, just as in life. She glided toward me, with never a word, gazed at me with her kindly eyes—and was gone. And the door shut of itself!

I confess I was shaken. For many moments I sat motionless, staring at the door through which the apparition had vanished. Then I shook off the spell and laughed.

"Certainly," I said aloud, "I was thinking of mother. My imagination played me a queer trick."

After those hours of talk with Fuller . . . certainly! It was easy to understand. I had been dozing too. There was the entire explanation.

I went over the analysis again in the morning, to Fuller.

"When you see spirits, Fuller, examine your own thoughts—or your eyesight."

"Dufrey," he said, "you have seen, yet you will not believe."

"Come into my laboratory," I replied with a smile. "I shall show you an ugly little devil under a slide. I hope he hasn't an eternal soul. None of us would care to meet him oftener than necessary."

My disbelief remained unshaken. I was invited to séances and to other such gatherings, but I refused to go.

BUT in the course of time, I met Emma. She was of "that tribe." Yet I loved her. And she loved me.

Love will do much. When Emma talked of an hereafter, I listened with delight. But it was her voice that delighted me—the unutterable music, the exquisite tones, veiled and mystic, that came from her lips. I argued, of course, against her beliefs. Yet at last she made me break my resolutions and I went with her to a séance. Throughout, in the dark, I held Emma's hand. The hocus-pocus going on around me, earned nothing but my derisive smile.

A halo of light floated through the blackness. Something that might have been called a human shape materialized (as they called it) in one corner of the room. Voices, seemingly far away, replied to hysterical questions, and painted beautiful word-pictures of a better world than ours. And, of more importance—the fat medium, at the end of the farce, collected a dollar from each of us.

Hocus-pocus? I'd say it was!

When we were out again in the brisk air, I said, half laughing, half piqued:

"My dear, do you really expect me to put stock in that shameless fraud?"

"Can you explain it away?" she asked, softly.

"I can think out a plausible explanation," I retorted.

She merely smiled.

The following week she lugged me to another meeting. Raps sounded in the walls. A table tipped and jigged. A planchette wrote, apparently unguided, a message from a

supposed departed. Once again we surrendered our dollars to the voracious spirits.

"Some show!" I said sarcastically, when we had reached the fresh air.

I am, you see, trying to tell you this in the rather ribald way it struck me at that time. There is no such ribaldry in me now. But of the change that came over me . . . later . . .

IT was at a séance that I met a young man, a friend of Emma's, by the name of Howard Kane. He was tall, thin, anaemic. And he was vehement in his arguments for spiritualism. He must, he said, convince the sceptics.

"Convince!" I laughed. "That should be an easy task!"

I noted that when my jibes were too deep at Kane, Emma seemed hurt. I grew a trifle jealous, perhaps, at her firm friendship with Kane. They seemed, with their common belief in spiritualism, to share a bond which, despite our love, I did not have with Emma.

Kane was a writer of books. What he wrote concerned itself mainly with the "other life"—as he imagined it must be. There were three or four of his volumes on Emma's book shelves, and she had long tried to persuade me to read them.

Finally I consented to take *The Other Sphere* with me on the train home one evening. Two chapters succeeded in boring me so that I threw the book into the rack with my hat. I nearly forgot it on getting out at my station. Then I had to confess to Emma that I couldn't get through Kane's frightful balderdash.

"Oh, you scientists think you know everything!" she exclaimed.

"But, my dear, I am behind six months with reading solid, scientific treatises! How can I spend time on this vaporing?"

She grew sad.

"I do wish you believed!" she sighed.

"Why—what difference would it make?"

"James, dear, one of us must die first and leave the other alone. Don't you think a belief that we must meet again would be a great comfort?"

I admitted that it was so. But how could I work myself into such a belief?

"Howard is writing a new book," she told me. "I've read the first half. It is wonderful, dear. It will give you faith."

"Don't try to get me to read it," I protested.

AFTER our marriage, Kane was a frequent guest over week-ends. But we saw little of him, except at meals, because he secluded himself in his room, where he wrote, hour after hour, on his new book. He would call it, he said, *The Irrefutable*.

"By George!" I laughed, when I was alone with Emma. "He doesn't lack conceit, does he?"

She looked reproachful.

"You," she said quietly, "are working in your laboratory for what you believe to be the good of your fellow-men. Howard is working upstairs—for the same end. Each in his own way, James."

"But," I smiled, "'The Irrefutable'! I don't say that of my science. Yet it's something we can see and feel."

"Howard sees and feels the unknown. He is having a hard struggle. The last half of his book is to be a vision of the hereafter. He has torn up three versions, in despair. He can't grasp what he needs to——"

"Isn't one version of the hereafter as good as another? We can't check up on it, can we?"

"What he finally writes," said Emma, in a low, vibrant voice, "will be the truth."

"You dear, deluded little——"

"*Fool*, dear? Is that what you meant to say?"

I was considerably annoyed, and there followed our first quarrel.

"I can't stand it—your belief in such stuff!" I cried. "The truth about the hereafter! The irrefutable!"

And that night, when Emma asked Kane to read us what he had written, I did not try to conceal my contempt.

He painted, surely, a beauteous picture of the promised sphere. His prose was lovely, musical, suave, ingratiating. He was a master of language.

"Words!" I cried. "Words, words, words—nothing but words!"

To my astonishment, Kane sprang from his chair.

"You are right," he muttered. "I know I have failed again. I have missed the . . . the *something* —— I have not caught the vibrations. You are right. Words, words, words! But I shall yet find words behind which the truth will blaze! I am determined to find them. You . . . you sceptic, and all such as you—I shall yet convince!"

I retreated to my laboratory, and until dawn I worked with the soothingly tangible.

"With sudden anger, I cried: 'What a hoax! What a madman's hoax! Don't you see it, Emma? Don't you see it? His insanity drove him to suicide . . .

"She shook her head sadly . . . 'You see, dear, I am dead, too.'

"After one unearthly moment, I screamed. Then—"

A DREADFUL restlessness, at times a veritable ferocity, came over Howard Kane. His appearance grew unkempt, his eyes were fiery, and I, knowing a little about the mental sciences, feared his mind was teetering toward unbalance. I told Emma that Kane was overworking his brain.

"He is striving," she answered, "for the irrefutable proof with which to end his book."

"The dream of a madman," I scoffed.

Kane, at that moment, burst in on us. In his shaking hand fluttered the sheets of his latest effort to capture a vision of a world to come.

"This is nearer," he cried. "Nearer, but not yet—— Will you listen?"

As neither of us answered, being too startled by his sudden outburst, he began to read. Again the smooth-flowing prose, without conviction. I interrupted:

"My dear fellow, all this is futile—childish. Some day, after you've been to this place you speak of——"

His stare froze me. Another moment, and he was gone. We saw him through a window, hatless in the sharp November air, stride past the gate and down the snow-patched road.

"Emma," I said. "He can't stand it. He's going mad."

Emma wept. I could not stop her tears.

"I feel that something awful is going to happen!" she moaned.

"To Kane?"

"I don't know! Where did he go? Oh, I wish he were back!"

My wishes were not the same, but I did not tell Emma so. I hoped fervently that we had seen the last of Kane and his *The Irrefutable*. Then, as I remembered that he must return for his belongings and his precious manuscript, I nearly groaned. I was so sure my wife would be better off without another sight of him. Her words, (*Continued on page* 63)

The Thing in the TREE

What influence could make a tree take on human characteristics?

His distorted face grinned leeringly—the eyes open, and bulging. It was Craig's face!

By John C. Wenhome

As told to
Harold Standish Corbin

AS I look back on that black night I wonder whether the ancient druids who venerated the oak and believed the mistletoe that clung to it emblematical of man's dependence on Deity, did not hold in their philosophy more knowledge of the forces of Nature than we moderns are aware of.

For it was a tree. And, the *thing* that was in the tree was what did for poor Craig—turned him into a gruesome, hideous abomination, and then killed him.

Even now I awake in the night, suffocated, paralyzed with fear as that terrifying memory returns to me. Craig—suspended there between heaven and earth—then that awful cry that escaped his lips! Craig who was my friend and one of the finest chaps you ever could meet—turned into a loathsome, hideous thing!

To me, Nature no longer holds her charms. Were I to tread a forest now, I would constantly search the sylvan glades for that strange contention that is taking place in Nature always. The wood-mouse's squeak to me would portend the coming of doom to the tiny creature. I could not look upon the beautiful blending of colors on the serpent's back, or the meticulous geometric design without thinking of his stabbing fangs filled with venom. And each beautiful flower would send me away shivering lest accompanying its beauty I might find some deadly miasmic effluvia that would scorch and blast.

Perhaps in time I shall gain control of myself again, but now I am afraid of the shadows that creep and recede in the dark places, and often I stop muscle-fast at the illusion from out the corner of my eye of some dread thing having moved or flicked itself around the corner. Of an evening as I sit reading, I turn the lights brightly so that I may observe every crack and cranny of the room. And I would not go into the darkness of the adjoining room for all the wealth of India.

Such is the terror that has seized me since I saw Craig die—dying as he did between heaven and earth—or hell and earth, if you please—for no other man died exactly as he did. So, in the hope that I may rid myself of this fear by holding it within me no longer, but may spread it in the clean sunlight of public knowledge, let me tell you my story.

THERE is, in the northern part of the State of Connecticut, a rocky chasm that has been named by the natives there, Cat Rocks. It is a wild and rugged place where bear formerly found sanctuary and its name is taken from the fact that for many years a great wild cat had its

den in the chasm, preying upon the farmers' fowl and young stock and avoiding for a long time the righteous wrath of the land-holders and the rifle bullet that at last ended its nefarious career. Standing at the brink, one may imagine the terrific straining and rending of the earth in travail as the chasm and its rocky sides were formed.

HARD by the chasm are scattered farms, rocky, hilly, poor, whose soil has become as beggarly as the generations of men and women that have worked them. Many of them now are abandoned by the newer generations who have become tired of a hand-to-mouth existence and have drifted away to the wealth and excitement of the cities.

It was such a farm that John Crandall occupied there. Crandall was intriguing. He lived the life of a recluse. He was short, thick-set, dark man who rarely spoke about himself and the little we knew of him was that he seemed to have enough of this world's goods to remain at ease when he liked, browsing in the queer collection of books he had accumulated in that strange house of his, filled with antiques.

But he was a good host to us when we visited him in the hunting season. Cat Rocks was one of the last stands of what game there is left in Connecticut and because of its out-of-the-way location has been a stronghold against the encroachments of civilization and the flivver.

Craig himself had introduced us to Crandall. There were in the group besides Craig, who was a lawyer—Stewart the banker, Batchelder the merchant, and myself, a newspaperman, all pals together and friends of long standing.

"I kicked and scuffed those terrible twining, crawling roots. I sprang upward only to come trampling down upon them. They seemed everywhere, squirming, running, working. I screamed aloud in my intensity to rid myself of them. Then——"

The hunting that season had been fair. But the day of the tragedy was overcast—one of those gray autumn days with an east wind blowing from the sea, not so many miles away. It chilled one to the very marrow of one's bones. Dead leaves whirled in spirals, and gusts of wind like the sudden rush of chilling, unseen spirits, swept over us.

With the coming of night we trailed in from the woods to Crandall's home and after a hot, delicious supper cooked by our host, we seated ourselves around the great fire-place in the old farmhouse, pipes aglow and our tired bodies warmly lazy. As is the way with Americans these days, our conversation drifted to prohibition and the concoctions of other times. Each had recalled some favorite drink when our host, who had had little part in our talk, broke in:

"There is a way of making apple toddy that few of the later day saints ever knew," he said. "Golden russet cider, a dash of sherry, the crab apples bobbing on its brown bosom and then a poker heated to cherry red to plunge into its midst that it may sizzle and seethe until hot. Ah, that is toddy worthy of a gentleman's compliment."

We applauded that, and laughingly called upon him to produce, but he held up his hand.

"THERE is another," he said, "a cider so mysterious, so potent, so insidious that I would not have you drink of it. For he who drinks is like to go stark, raving mad."

This pronouncement only served to whet our interest. We were four logical, candid persons, and naturally we were skeptical as to any drink of cider being potent enough to put us into the condition mentioned.

"What is this cider you mention that has such dire possibilities?" said Craig banteringly. "What is there so different about this particular cider?"

"A liquid so palely golden, so smooth that it is artful and sly. I tell you, by the gods, one drink of it will send you stark, raving mad. Let's say no more about it."

"You're crazy," said Craig. "I've tasted the wines of France and Italy—the sauternes, burgundies, clarets, chiantis, and the whole lot of them and I've not gone mad yet. What kind of juice is this?"

"You have never tasted the juice of Gaillard's russet," replied Crandall quietly.

"Gaillard's russet!" Craig scoffed.

The argument seemed likely to wax as hot as the heat of the logs around which we toasted our shins. Crandall apparently wished to change the subject. Craig insisted. He desired to know for himself. I thought Crandall baited him.

Craig finally demanded a sip of the liquor in question. The warmth of the fire had begun to sink into our chilled frames and we were comfortably amused. Craig's demands became louder. Crandall hesitated.

Then, as though debating still, he reached above his head and took from among the antiques variously suspended on wall and ceiling, an ancient *lanthorne*, and opened its battered side to light the candle within. For a second the candle sputtered protestingly as though it resisted the journey on which it was bound, then broke into a pale, yellow flame when the door of it was closed.

"Come," said the host, a note of crafty eagerness rising in his voice. "Watch out for the cobwebs on the cellar stair."

He laughed harshly. "Cobwebs," he continued, "sometimes give one the peculiar sensation when drifting across the face, of cold, clammy hands of the dead that reach out to ensnare and seize one from the dark."

"YOU needn't be so ghastly about the thing," muttered Batchelder. The wind howled mournfully outside and the shutters rattled and boards creaked in distant parts of the house.

Crandall apologized but informed us he could not bring the cider to the room in which we sat.

"Drink it in the cellar if you must drink it at all," he commanded. Again there rose that note—or was I imagining it?—of eagerness in his voice. He continued:

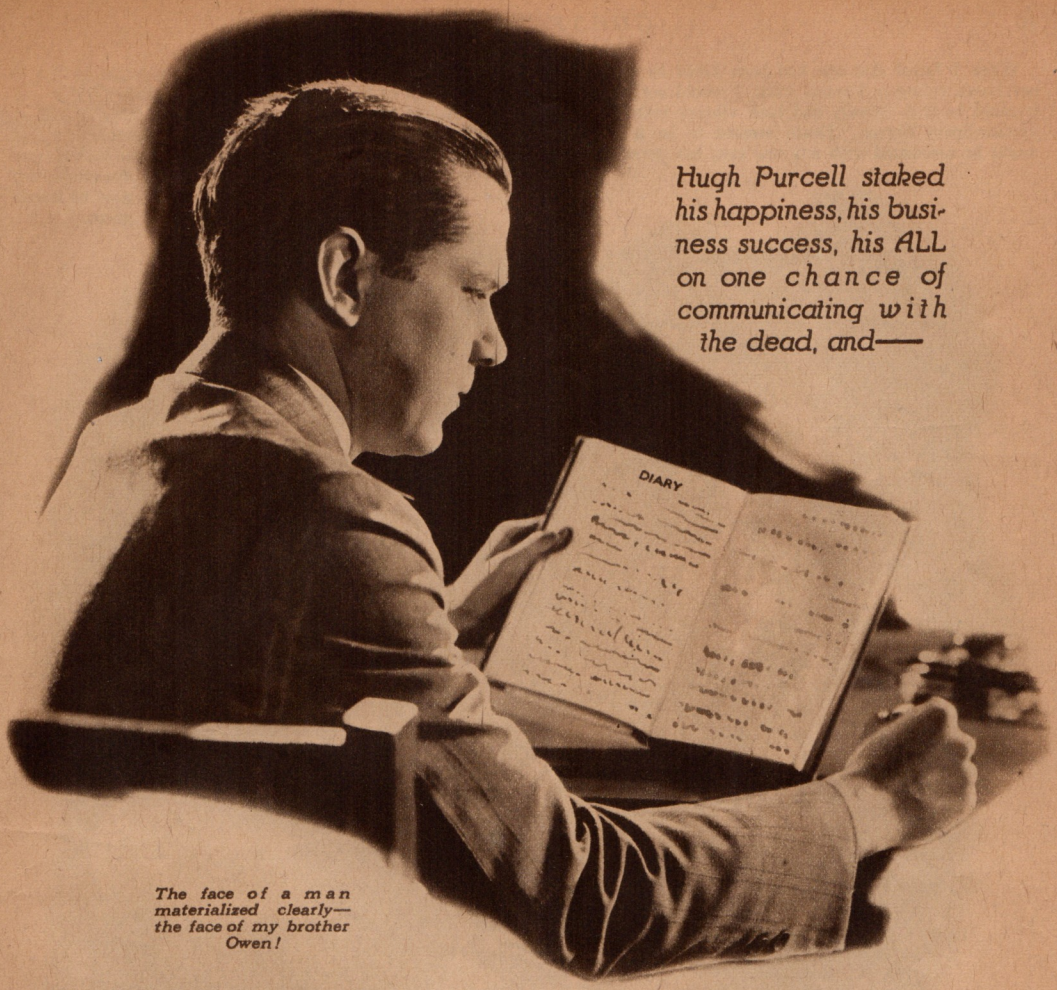
"I will not have you mad up here. Strong walls surround the cellar. I may have to chain one of you there for the night until the power of the beverage passes."

"Mildly interesting," laughed Craig, but there was a creepy feeling down my spine that I did not particularly enjoy.

We turned to follow the lead of Crandall, for none of us grown men would so much as permit another to think our host's croakings caused us any alarm.

Down the dark, uneven stairs we trooped. Crandall leading with the *lanthorne* giving none too good a light, our feet stumbling, our bodies bumping against stones that must have been there for ages. Cobwebs entangled us with ghostly clutchings, drooling across our faces like clammy things from some other realm. Water dripped noisily and there were many scurrying in the half darkness. Shadows danced, receded, and sprang forward with lean fingers to grasp and tear at our bodies. Craig struck his head against a low beam and fell backward upon us. Almost in concert we cursed.

At last Crandall paused near a (*Continued on page 67*)



Hugh Purcell staked his happiness, his business success, his ALL on one chance of communicating with the dead, and——

The face of a man materialized clearly—the face of my brother Owen!

LOVE—and the Last Frontier

By Hugh Docre Purcell

Narrated by W. Adolphe Roberts

EVERY person has one supreme story about himself to tell. So at least it is said.

I have long been an investigator of psychic phenomena and expect to continue in that field. Perhaps I shall be able to add a little to the scientific wisdom of the world. But I know that nothing can ever surpass, in importance to me, the spiritual adventure I have decided to set down here.

Its recital may help others too. I hope so. Certainly, it provides an answer to one of the oldest problems of mankind, and there may be readers who can apply it personally.

The event that started me down a strange path was the death several years ago of the girl to whom I was engaged. Her name was Emily Greenway. We had met at high school in Brooklyn, had discovered that our families were neighbors, and had grown up together with a tacit understanding that we would marry as soon as possible.

Many boys and girls play along with that sort of romance. But we meant it. We did not rush matters. We were both over twenty before we made definite plans, and the fact of setting a date threw us into each other's arms with a consciousness of mature love that was very deep and very real.

When I heard that she had been killed by a fall from her horse, riding in Central Park, I would not believe that it could be true. Emily had been vibrant with life, to an extraordinary degree. Death seemed to be a word that might be associated with any one else, but never with her.

I found myself listening to the voice of Emily Greenway — her words sounding clearly through my brother's lips!

Forced at last to acknowledged the truth, my grief was devastating. There would be little gained by attempting to describe it. Those who have lost the person dearest to them in all the world will understand.

I had, at that time, already gone pretty seriously into the matter of spiritualism. The results to be obtained from table tipping, the ouija board, automatic writing and other similar means of communication were familiar to me.

I was not convinced that the messages received were actually messages from the departed, though I did not deny that they might be. Was there a life beyond the tomb, any way? Absolute proof of this appeared to me to be lacking. I kept my mind open to the theory that all the phenomena ever produced by any medium might be due to the workings of the law of telepathy, or mind-reading.

Emily had known of my interest in the subject, but had said little about it to me. She had never cared to attend a séance, and I had taken it for granted that she looked upon the whole business as hocus-pocus.

After the first shock of her death had worn away, I inevitably thought of trying to establish a contact with her by way of the occult. Yet I found myself shrinking from making a definite attempt, as though it were something that might harm her and was, in a way, an insult to her memory.

I didn't then understand why I felt that way. I went so far as to reason with myself and conclude that I was supersensitive, perhaps hysterical on account of my sorrow, that what I really dreaded was failure in an attempt to communicate and consequent loss of faith in the persistence of her identity. I resolved that as soon as I had my nerves

under control I would seek a message.

The fact remains, however, that I did nothing about it until my will was stimulated by the earliest of a truly amazing sequence of circumstances.

About a year after Emily's death, I was visiting at the house of her mother when the latter asked abruptly:

"Did you know that Emily kept a diary?"

"Why, yes," I answered, smothering the pang that went through me at the mere mention of the beloved name. "But she never showed it to me."

"You ought to see it now, Hugh," said Mrs. Greenway. "There are a good many entries which concern you."

She fetched two slim manuscript books, bound in limp leather, and placed them in my hands.

"There should be three volumes. The second—the middle one—has not been found," she declared in her precise way. "I'll send it to you, if it turns up."

I CRIED that evening like a child, as I read the simple, beautifully-worded chronicle of her thoughts about life in general, about love, about me, that my dead sweetheart had written. But from the angle of this true story, the important entry was the following:

"Hugh is becoming more and more of a student of spiritualism, but he goes at it sanely, thank heaven! After all, why shouldn't he try to put his finger upon the key to the great mystery? Suppose I should die before he does! I'd want him to be able to reach out to me beyond the barrier, and from my side I'd do everything possible to help. Our love would find a way to bring us together again."

"'Are you strong enough, Owen, to bridge the gap between me and Emily, in death?

"'It's possible. But remember, we may get what we want, or we may be attacked by the forces of evil. It's a gamble.'

"I had too much at stake to allow his ominous words to frighten me, so——"

The effect that this produced upon me can be imagined. Emily wanted me to communicate with her, had thought about it while she was still alive, was eager to meet me half way. I reproached myself for not having tried before, and I rushed to enlist the help of a friend, John Lang, who usually sat in with me at my amateur séances.

The same evening, at my flat, we drew a small, light table to the middle of the room, placed our finger-tips upon it and appealed to the forces of the unknown to grant me a contact with Emily Greenway.

As I have already explained in this magazine, table tipping is one of the simplest means of unleashing psychic activity. A person of even small mediumistic power, aided by one or two others who need not be psychics, can always get the table to vibrate and to tap out messages. The belief is, that a ghostly "control" is present and uses the table through the medium. Messages are spelled by running through the letters of the alphabet, tapping once for "A," twice for "B," and so forth.

IN a few minutes—with exceptional promptitude, as I noted—Lang and I obtained results. The customary flood of broken, almost meaningless stuff with which séances open, poured in upon us. There appear to be many feeble spirits which hover about and compete with one another for any chance to talk. But they can be driven away. Time and again, I repeated earnestly, tensely:

"I want to speak to Emily Greenway, to no one but Emily Greenway."

And after a while, a dialogue took place as follows:

"I am here," said the table.

"Who is here? Spell the name," I muttered, my heart leaping in my throat.

"Emily Greenway," the table tapped out.

"Can you see me from where you are?"

"O, yes! All is clear to us."

"Can you describe your present existence?"

"It is like the life on earth—only we have no bodies. We think a thing, and it is enough—it is done."

"Have you a message for me?"

"Yes, you must have faith."

"Faith in what?"

"In the life of the spirit—that we shall be reunited here."

"But I implore you, tell me something personal, intimate—about ourselves."

"We are on different planes, and you are not ready to understand me. You must have faith."

"Will you speak to me more clearly later on?"

"Yes, when you have cleared your heart of doubt. We cannot come very close to those on earth who doubt."

There was a great deal more of it and it took some little time for these messages to get through. But the above will suffice. It is typical of the rest.

I am sure that a person who had never before received a message purporting to be from beyond the grave would have been greatly impressed. But I had had dozens of them, and I was loath to believe that the girl who had loved me could find no better use for this opportunity than to paraphrase the childish, vague sort of jargon that comes up in séances every night in the year, from New York to the Antipodes and from London to Tokio.

What sense was there in telling me that spirits had "no bodies," that we were on "different planes"? I already knew that must be so. A single gossipy comment, such as the real Emily would have rattled off to me after a long separation, would have been worth the price of a year of my mortal life. But the boon had been denied me.

I USED the talking table in several other attempts to reach Emily, but the result always was unsatisfactory. I seemed to be in touch with her—and she talked nonsense. It was doubly distressing, because I had had experiences in getting messages from other departed persons.

I quit at last—disgusted. I felt that I was being hoaxed by some evil influence, and whenever at a séance the control announced that Emily was present, I withdrew my hands and refused to listen.

I fell into a morbid state of mind. I was desperately lonely, but though I continued to see a number of my men friends I kept rigidly away from women. I believed that the least I could do was to remain faithful, in thought no less than in deed, to the memory of Emily. She certainly would have done as much if I had died, I told myself, and she would expect it of me. I practically took a vow of celibacy. Yet I was conscious that I had thereby added to my burden, and in the same breath I cursed at my lack of spirituality.

The next year was the most unhappy I had ever passed. Then, just as I had reached a stunned acceptance of my fate, a remarkable phenomenon occurred. (*Continued on page 84*)

By Martha Higgins

The Man Who

Greed tempted this man to tam- dreamed of the terrible price

"Don't let me see you back here again!" shouted old Hesther

"THERE it is!" A perceptible shudder ran through the little group waiting breathlessly in a corner of my veranda. Necks craned and eyes strained toward "Hawkes Place."

It wasn't the first time most of us had seen it—that ghost-like presence wandering in Hesther's garden. But there is something about a ghost that you cannot take casually—no matter how often you may see it.

"Mighty darned funny!" Davey Perkins' voice quavered weakly. Then, more firmly. "Oh, hell! There's some explantation to the thing! There are no real ghosts! I'm going over and investigate. Anyone want to come along?"

We drew instinctively closer together, at that, then Fred Scott spoke up, reluctantly: "Well——"

"Oh! Good Lord! Don't come if you don't want to. But I mean to find out what's back of all this." And without waiting further Davey started off.

"Well, perhaps I had better ——" Fred got no further for at the very idea of his going little Janet Reid, his fiancée, became hysterical. "Oh, Freddie, you mustn't! Something terrible will happen to you!" She threw herself into his arms, clinging

Borrowed a GHOST

per with the Unknown. He little he was to pay for his folly

wildly. "Oh, Freddie, Freddie—stop him somebody!—Mrs. Higgins——"

"All right, Janet, honey, he won't go if you don't want him to, will you, Fred?" I put my arms around her, and she clung to me, sobbing hysterically. "There, there, child! It's all right. Pull yourself together, honey. Fred won't go. Speak to her, Fred. You aren't going, are you?"

"No-o." Fred allowed himself to be dissuaded, rather sheepishly. "I don't want to upset anybody. But—well, I don't like the idea of Davey going over there alone. Do—do you think he will be all right, Mrs. Higgins?"

"Well, it seems to be a nice peaceable ghost," I reassured him. "And if it isn't, I don't see that there is anything you could do about it, do you? After all, what can one do about a ghost?" I laughed—a bit shakily, I'm afraid.

Just at that moment there was a cry of surprise from one of the party.

"It's gone!"

And sure enough, there in the moon-light lay the garden, empty but for the shadows that fell here and there in deep patches of mystery. In our excitement over Janet, we had forgotten to keep watch, and the figure had vanished, unheeded.

"Do you suppose Davey had time——"

"Never in the world. He can't be half way there, yet."

We stood in silence, watching, waiting, and presently a dark figure appeared in the moon-lit space behind the house.

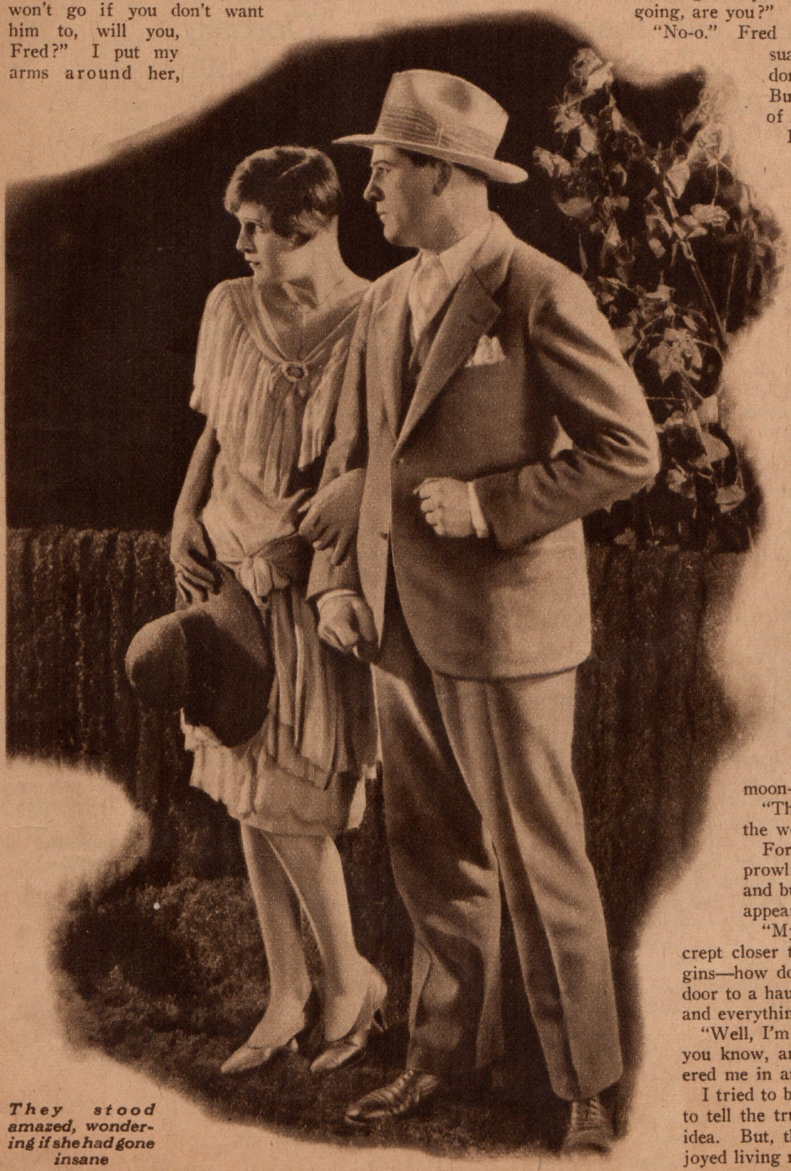
"There's Davey!" We breathed the words almost in unison.

For a time we could see him prowling about among the shrubs and bushes, then he turned and disappeared into the shadows.

"My, he has courage!" Janet crept closer to me. "And you, Mrs. Higgins—how do you stand living right next door to a haunted house, and you all alone and everything?"

"Well, I'm really not so very close to it, you know, and the ghost has never bothered me in any way."

I tried to be quite casual about it all, but to tell the truth I didn't exactly relish the idea. But, then, I had never exactly enjoyed living next door to Hesther Hawkes,



They stood amazed, wondering if she had gone insane

even when she was alive, though she never bothered me then, any more than her ghost—if it actually *was* her ghost—bothered me now.

A strange, unfriendly recluse she had been, and in the many years we had shared Treetop Hill together she had never so much as acknowledged my existence. Folks said I was a fool to build up there, away from everyone but "Crazy Hesther" as they called her, but I had never regretted it. Jim and I had always planned to spend our last days together in that glorious spot, and if it was God's will that he should pass on before me—well, there was something soothing to me in carrying out the plan anyway, for Jim had wanted it so and I felt he would know and be pleased.

After the years in crowded cities, years of homesickness for the fields and the sky and the feel of growing things, this return to our hilltop brought me a great sense of serenity and peace. Standing at my front window, looking out over the miles of country stretching away in every direction, you would have believed I was banished from the rest of the world, but in reality I could reach a dozen old friends in short order, either by telephone or with the aid of my car.

"We both saw Hesther's ghost. She came in here and shook her fist at us. Dorothy fainted and I threw a pillow at the ghost, but she just stood there grinning wickedly at me. Then gradually she began to fade out, still grinning, grinning . . . . . "

IF Hesther Hawkes was not the pleasantest of neighbors at least her house was a constant joy to behold. A jewel of a house it was, set there against a thicket of dark green pine trees, with a checker-board of green fields stretching away at its feet. It gave one a constant sense of perfect composition, as though an artist had painted it into the landscape. And indeed it had been built by an artist (for surely an architect of Sidney Landon's caliber may truthfully be called an artist)—an artist in love and weaving the spell of love and romance and dreams into his creation of stone and brick and mortar.

They had been a sort of nine days wonder in Spratville—that artist, and that house, and that romance. Spratville! Terrible name for a town, isn't it?

Spratville!—sleepy, picturesque—a place where nothing ever happened. An ideal place it was to spend days of reflection and comparative inactivity, after the real business of one's life had been accomplished elsewhere. But to the youth of the town it spelled mental and spiritual apathy. One could hardly blame those parents who lived there, and who could manage it, for sending their daughters off to college—not for an education but for a more eligible husband than could be found at home. After all, no mother who has known the drudgery of a farm can be blamed for wanting something better for her daughter.

When, years before, in the autumn after her graduation from high school, Hesther Hawkes had watched most of her classmates depart for their various colleges, and felt herself left behind, it must have added to the store of bitterness already in her heart. For, doubtless she too had wanted to go to college. Not that she would ever say anything about it—Hesther never told the world what she was thinking or feeling about anything.

At the early age of six, the Stimpsons had adopted her—"to help Ma with the work." She had accepted her fate sullenly, but without comment. Perhaps, after all, working on the Stimpson farm was better than the orphanage. But the brooding, the bitterness, back of those great eyes of hers, was not pleasant to see. "Queer," we called her, right from the first, and "queer" she remained to the end.

She was sent to school and church and she mingled with the other young folks, but with an aloof, almost formal manner, that was strange in one so young. No one ever knew what went on behind those smouldering black eyes.

As she grew older, one great outstanding characteristic became apparent to everyone. Hesther loved beauty—beautiful things—with a deep, burning ecstacy that amounted to mania. You would see her in the aisle of Spratville's one department store, reverently fingering a bit of colorful fabric, her great eyes pools of mingled delight and misery. Perhaps months afterward you would see her wearing a dress of that same fabric, and you could only guess at the extra work, the privations she had endured to secure it.

Strange things, Hesther's dresses! She made them, herself, after no pattern that the mode dictated, yet always there was a quality of the picturesque, the colorful, the striking about them, simple though they always were, that made her an arresting figure in any group of which she was a member. And she had a way of wearing her things that gave her a kind of distinction. "Unusual" we called her, but it wasn't until that second summer after her school days that we discovered she was beautiful. Indeed we might never have known it, had not Sidney Landon made us see her through his eyes.

We used to notice Sidney wandering around the Spears' farm, now and then taking a hand with the work, but more often just idling about in the sunshine.

"City chap, recuperating from an illness," Ma Spears told us. "Artist or architect or something. Nice boy—but queer."

"Queer was our word for anyone we didn't altogether understand, anyone cut in a pattern different from Spratville folk. And Sidney *was* different—no doubt about that. As his strength returned, he began making friends among us, and not a soul who knew him but was completely captivated by his charm. Handsome, gay, friendly in a straightforward fashion, he was filled with the joy of life. His flights of fancy thrilled and awed us, his practical, clear-seeing mind won our admiration. His wistfulness awakened our spontaneous sympathy, and the sheer, exuberant boyishness of him won our unstinted love. A charming boy, Sidney, and there was not a woman for miles around who didn't try to mother him, nor a man who didn't enjoy exchanging views with him on any and every topic under the sun.

But after he met Hesther he became as one bewitched. I don't know where she had been keeping herself all summer—perhaps just at home on the Stimpson farm—but it was well on in August when Sidney caught sight of her, and apparently she just swept him off his feet.

IT was at some sort of a church sociable, and I remember my husband and Sidney and I were having our refreshments together off in one corner. In the middle of a sentence Sidney suddenly stopped short, stiffened as though he had seen a ghost, and said: "Lord!" in sort of a gasping way. Then: "Who is that *beautiful* woman?"

We both looked about in astonishment. "Beautiful woman? Where?"

"Over there—in the violet dress."

"You mean Hesther Hawkes?" (*Continued on page 72*)

The Crawling SPECTER of Hatfield Hall

With one man killed by the Unknown Specter, two others have the courage to sleep at Hatfield Hall

By Dr. Caleb — Told by Mrs. Jack Purcell

THE name on the flap of the envelope was that of an old friend—Fred Hatfield. And, it had been mailed at a town not many miles distant from my own home town, just over the line into Virginia.

I would rather have had it from any one of a hundred other friends. I knew Fred. He was one of those men who sit around a club fireplace and talk about their perfect health. And truly, Fred's health had always been astonishingly good. He'd never admit a sickness. Nothing less than the shadow of death itself would ever frighten him into seeking a doctor's aid.

So I tore open the envelope rather hastily:

"You helped our mutual friend John Carroll. Please help me now. It may be just nerves and then again it may be the devil. Anyway, come on out and see me. Take the first train. I still have some of that old Scotch that you liked so well."

It wasn't the kind of note I cared for at all. In fact I felt a premonition as I stuffed it back in the envelope, that I should not go.

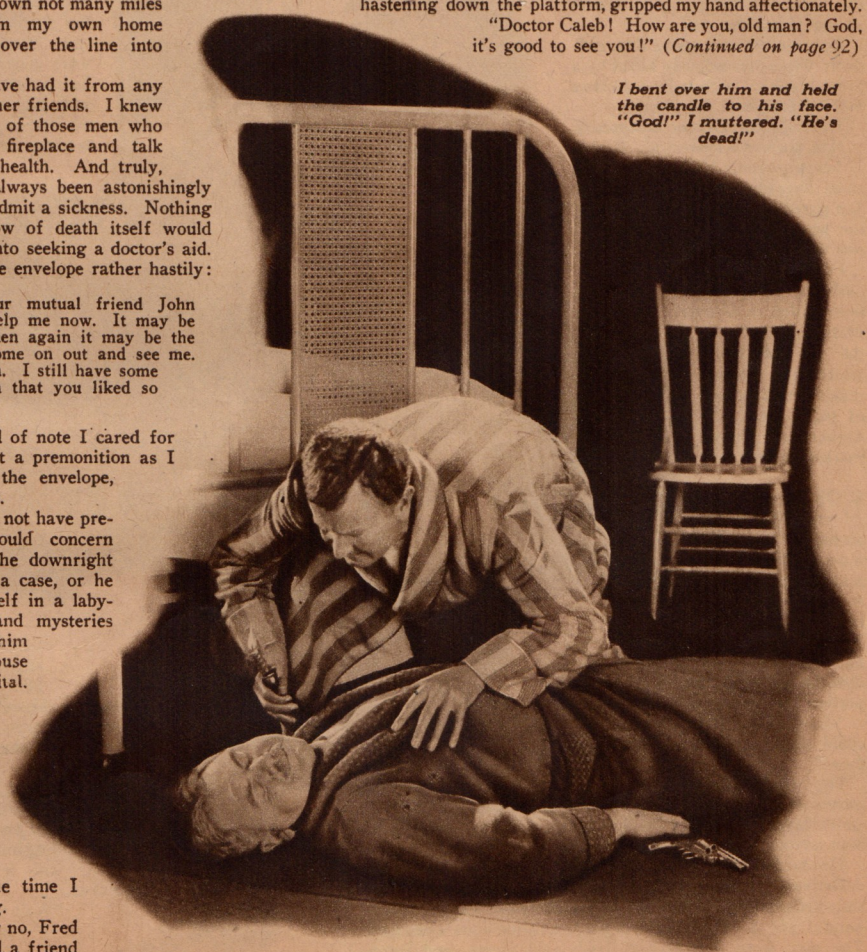
But a doctor must not have premonitions. He should concern himself only with the downright physical aspects of a case, or he will soon find himself in a labyrinth of theories and mysteries that will soon land him in either a mad-house or a dope-cure hospital.

"Ignore it," a perfectly distinct voice kept saying. "It's another one of those occult affairs, and will give you something else to have nightmares about." And all the time I was packing my bag.

For nightmares or no, Fred Hatfield was too old a friend to be ignored when he made an appeal to me for help.

He met me at the station with his Stutz roadster and hastening down the platform, gripped my hand affectionately.

"Doctor Caleb! How are you, old man? God, it's good to see you!" (*Continued on page 92*)



I bent over him and held the candle to his face. "God!" I muttered. "He's dead!"

Under the SPELL of the

Beautiful Evelyn Grover is helpless in the grip explain the astounding mystery

IN the old Colonial days, "Groverly," the Virginia manse of Doctor Grover, was used as headquarters for the devil cult—the *Red Circle*—and the curse remained upon it, of these workers of iniquity.

Evelyn, beautiful daughter of the household, is subjected to strange spells and lapses into an apparently sub-conscious state in which she talks in the individuality of another person.

Strange noises are heard . . . a weird, horrible laugh floats through the night's stillness . . . a picture springs from the wall.

Rex, the doctor's police dog, suddenly dies—mysteriously killed by a great black cat with poisoned claws that hovers about the place.

Then Doctor Grover disappears.

Mrs. Grover is hysterical. Evelyn is heart-broken. Mammy Jane the cook, Sam the butler and Togo the Jap gardener, huddle in corners of the house, fearful what may happen next.

Professor Travers, eminent authority on spiritism who has been called to Groverly to investigate, finds in the room from which the doctor disappeared, a bit of paper on which appears a circle, marked in red.

The detectives watched Evelyn advance to embrace Travers

FOR a few seconds Travers stared at the ominous symbol in mute horror. It was ostensibly a warning. The *Red Circle*, Tracy's devil cult, had abducted the doctor—that was obvious. Perhaps they were even now putting him to unspeakable torture.

"Good God!" Travers cried. "How could they have accomplished his capture?"

The windows and doors were intact. The only means of an entrance or an exit was by way of the stairs leading into the living-room. And he would have seen anyone, and heard any struggle.

He said nothing about the sinister warning until two detectives arrived from Headquarters. They were tall, stalwart minions of the law with a contempt for the supernatural and a complex for asking multitudinous questions. The men were brothers, of Irish antecedents, and introduced each other as Mike O'Hara and Timothy O'Hara, respectively.

Travers told them about the weird laugh, the noises, the black cat with its poisoned claws, the leaping picture—and described Evelyn's strange obsession, much to her embarrassment.

"Thinks she's somebody else, eh?" grunted Mike O'Hara, staring at her. Travers darted her a sympathetic glance.

"Only occasionally," said Travers, hastily. He knew that they would not consider the possibility of a spirit control. Moreover, as far as they were concerned, Evelyn's hallucinations had nothing to do with the strange disappearance of Doctor Grover. These detectives simply afforded additional protection in the ancient house as far as Mrs. Grover and Evelyn were concerned. They would be of little assistance in solving the mystery of the doctor's sudden disappearance.

"Well," said Mike O'Hara, "this cat and picture business and that funny laugh you mentioned, sounds like the imagining of a lunatic."

"I'll say it does!" said his brother.

"Well then, we're all lunatics!" snapped Mrs. Grover. "We saw and heard these things. At any rate, my

RED CIRCLE

By Wilbert Wadleigh

of the Colonial Phantom—helpless even then to of her father's untimely death

husband is gone, and we know nothing of his disappearance."

She was crying softly. Evelyn put her arms around her.

The detectives studied them placidly.

"This red circle," remarked Mike O'Hara, holding up the bit of paper, "may have been left by the doctor."

Travers smiled indulgently.

"Let's go over the house," said Timothy, rising and yawning. "Gosh—pardon, folks, but I'm sleepy. I'd just hit the hay, when you called up."

Travers took them over the house, answering questions, and explaining his suspicions that the house contained secret passages.

"Well," said Timothy, "that secret passage idea is possible enough." He sounded the walls with his huge knuckles, but they all seemed solidly constructed. "This joint is old enough, ain't it? Built before the Revolution?"

Travers nodded.

"It is my belief," he said, "that Tracy's devil cult, the *Red Circle*, wanted this place because of some hidden rendezvous. How they knew of it, is, of course, hard to imagine."

"Well, Tracy wanted it bad enough," agreed Mike. "He's dead, now, though. But some of his gang may still be together."

They discussed the mysterious message Evelyn had written, signed "Ronald Tracy."

"'We die to be born again'," read Mike. "'Mind is all. The rest is cosmic dust.' What does all that mean?"

He glanced at his brother, and at Travers.

"Well," said Timothy, "it means that the girl is crazy. She wrote the blamed note herself. It doesn't make sense, anyway."

The detectives asked to see Evelyn's room. Travers led the way. He explained that Mrs. Grover had been across the hall when the note had been written, that Evelyn had screamed, and that her mother had rushed in to find the strange message in her daughter's hands.

"Anthony!" she exclaimed, holding out her arms to him

"You see, it's in a masculine hand," said Travers. "Have you ever heard of automatic writing?"

"Automatic what?" grunted Mike.

Travers shrugged.

"Oh, it's a sort of psychic manifestation—a spirit writes a message through a subject who is in a trance."

"Bunk," said Timothy, shortly, glancing suspiciously at Travers. "Are you a little cracked, too?"

Travers smiled.

"Well, gentlemen, how was the note written?"

"Hell! She wrote it, of course!" said Timothy. "She's a nut, all right. I wouldn't be surprised but what she had something to do with her father's disappearance."

Mike O'Hara nodded with an air of convinced agreement.

"She'll bear watching," he agreed.

Travers turned away in disgust. There was no use in trying to discuss the supernatural with these hard-headed minions of law and order, he decided. They already considered him a suspicious character.

"Well," said Mike, glancing at his watch, "it's three o'clock. It will be daylight in a short while, and we can take a look around the outside of the house. The doctor must have gotten outside some way or other. Probably he's crazy, too."

THE morning passed uneventfully, the two detectives going over the house and grounds thoroughly. Doctor Grover's disappearance remained a profound mystery. Mrs. Grover and Evelyn were frantic. Oddly enough, it was Evelyn who proved the calmer of the two, comforting her mother as best she could, though her own heart was heavy, oppressed by a nameless fear.

They refused to eat breakfast, and when they did not appear for luncheon, Travers became worried.

"Something has to be done," he told the detectives. "We simply must find the doctor."

Timothy scratched his head helplessly.

"All we can do is watch the place," he said.

The three men were seated in the library. Travers was busy deciphering some more of the coded memoranda in the ancient diary.

"I don't see what bearing that stuff has on the case," the burly Timothy remarked, glancing over Travers' shoulder. "These birds lived so long ago, and what has the French Revolution to do with all of this?"

Travers smiled tolerantly.

"You'll notice that Brainard refers to Anthony Jacques, and to a Captain Jacques."

"What of it?"

"Well, Miss Grover, in her occasional obsessions, imagines that she is Marie Jacques—Captain Jacques' daughter."

"Sure," said Mike, lightly. "Probably read all about it in that book, and it got on her mind."

"No, it is only in the cipher part that Jacques is mentioned. I deciphered the first notation last night."

The detectives were dubious.

"And, furthermore, Miss Grover, when she thinks she is this Marie, believes me to be 'Anthony Jacques.' You will notice that Brainard mentions such a person as being on his way from France on business for the Commune, at Paris."

Mike and Timothy regarded him blankly.

"Say," said Timothy; "you said that you were a professor of spiritualism or something?"

Travers smiled, nodding.

"WELL," the detective continued, "I suppose you want us to believe that the spirit of this here Marie Jacques gets tangled up some way with Miss Grover?"

"I don't want to force you to believe anything," said Travers dryly. "I'm simply giving you the facts. Not that it will mean anything to you."

He shrugged as if to say, "Why waste words on them?"

"Well, we're not so dumb, young fellow," said Mike. "This spook stuff is out, though. I suppose you want us to believe that you are this Anthony, now?"

Travers frowned angrily.

"Don't be an ass! I told you that Miss Grover, when under one of her spells, thinks I am Anthony Jacques. I am not going to discuss with you the various tenable theories as to why she imagines this. I am merely telling you these things so that you will understand the psychology of any forthcoming manifestations that, sooner or later, are bound to appear."

"Does she get these spells often?" asked Timothy.

"One can never tell when they will come about," said the professor. "As a matter of fact, I am under the impression that they can be brought about by hypnotic induction. Now," he continued crisply, as Mike started to protest; "let us understand each other, gentlemen. I am going to be very frank. When Doctor Grover disappeared, I had Sam send for you, both as a matter of form, and to obtain additional protection for the ladies. I did not then expect you to believe my theories, nor do I now expect you to."

He lowered his voice impressively.

"Gentlemen, I believe that before you leave this house, you will have been in the gravest danger in your experiences. It will pay you both to be constantly on your mettle."

"Shutting off the light, they halted in the pitchy darkness, revolvers ready. . . Travers ducked quickly as something brushed by him—something a part of those flaming eyes . . . 'Oh!—help! Connor—for God's sake—!' Travers struck a match, to reveal O'Hara lying upon the ground, writhing in agony, blood trickling from his face."

They glanced at each other, and stared at him.

"What do you mean?" growled Timothy.

"I MEAN that Tracy's devil cult, the *Red Circle*, have abducted Dr. Grover. I mean that they are watching this house right now—in fact, are *in* it!"

"Rubbish," said Mike, glancing around nervously.

"Well," exclaimed Timothy, "that secret passage business is certainly possible, though we went over all of the walls pretty thoroughly this morning. But it's confounded peculiar—the way he disappeared."

Travers nodded.

"You must at least admit that it is a mystery. Now, I am going to make a little experiment, gentlemen, and I want you to leave me alone. You can watch, if you desire. Briefly, I am going to have a talk with—the colonial phantom."

"The *what?*" exclaimed Timothy.

"With the ghost of Marie Jacques. I shall summon her——"

The men looked at each other, Mike grinning.

"He's batty!" he exclaimed.

But Travers was standing facing toward the stairs in the living-room, his face stern, arm outstretched.

"Marie Jacques, I summon you," he said, with a strange intensity. "I will you to come to me, Marie——"

Mike started to say something, but his brother restrained him. They watched Travers silently as he faced the stairs, his figure tense, his green-gray eyes radiating power.

"Come, Marie," he said; "Anthony wills it."

They heard a door close upstairs, and footsteps in the hall. Soon they descried a white— (*Continued on page 69*)

In the *Clutches* of the BLACK IDOL

What cruel living horror lurked in the dead stone heart of this hideous image?

By Vera Darrell

I HAD given up Ann Ogden's party and had pressed Billy Dane into service as my escort to satisfy this whim of mine. It was like so many of the things I do, without reason and on sheer impulse. Major Bassett had fascinated me with his tales of mystery and adventure of the south seas and the Orient, and I could not wait until I had seen him in the midst of the queer surroundings of which I had heard so much. Ann Ogden herself had introduced us.

"Best family in England, Vera," she had told me in a whispered aside. "Just retired after years and years in the Orient. Such stories! They'll raise the hair off your head! And Vee," she added, "I don't believe he's ever seen a movie star!"

I was far from contemplating a conquest, for I was in Santa Barbara to rest between pictures.

"Don't, Miss Darrell! Keep your hands off the black idol!"

But that whole evening I had listened spell-bound to Major Bassett, as he told in his low, colorful voice tales of queer people and strange incidents in places that one had never heard of. Oh, he had lived an interesting life; and he had brought back with him the eerie, mystic quality of the savages he had lived among. His tales were gruesome with the dark, shadowy veil of witchcraft and incantation, and I could see that he believed it all himself.

HE had been struck with my attentiveness, and had spoken to me alone for a few moments before leaving.

"I've brought a lot of curios from the tropics that you might like to see, Miss Darrell. Some of them have queer stories, and fairy tales always gain by being told in the proper setting." He smiled a little, but I knew that to him they were not fairy tales.

"I'd love to come!" I said; thrilled by the somber look in his eyes. "When shall it be?"

We had set a date, and now with Billy Dane by my side, we were going to inspect Major Bassett's strange collection. To be sure Billy had not been over-enthusiastic, but I had had my way. We drove in silence down the palm-lined avenue. The lights on the boulevard shone hazily, for a faint mist was creeping in from the sea. Some of the Major's weird fantastic tales leaped vividly into my recollection, and I felt something of the same creepy feeling that had so fascinated me when I heard him telling them. The night breeze had come up briskly, for summer had not yet set in, and I drew my wrap around me. A sudden chill swept through me and made me shiver.

Had I been wise to insist on coming? A vague foreboding stole over me now that I was actually on my way to see him again. Perhaps it was something about the man himself, as I pictured him in my imagination. A striking figure, tall and spare, he had the deep bronze color and slightly sunken cheeks that Britishers acquire in the tropics. But far more than his appearance was the feeling one got that he had seen too much. Grave and inscrutable, he seemed of a part with the mysterious figures that stalked through his stories. An uneasy feeling crept over me, and the expectation of seeing Major Bassett's marvels no longer held such allure. I almost wished I hadn't come.

BUT the brakes of the car shrilled sharply as we swung into a private drive, and we were there. The Major bowed low as we entered, as if ushering us into the throne room of some Oriental potentate. I crossed the threshold, and lost my fears in wonder and amazement. Never had I seen such a room! No Oriental palace or even a museum could boast such a display. From the floor to the vaulted ceiling the walls were hung with marvels—glowing shawls and tapestries, curious bronzes and statuary, weapons of brass and iron, and ornaments and strange devices of heaven knows what materials or use. I gasped at the spectacle.

Throttled by a horrible fear, I saw talons of fingers reach into the room

"It's not effective, I'm afraid," said Major Bassett deprecatingly. "It's all too crowded; I have so little room. These are just my choice bits, you see; there are crates

and crates that I haven't even unpacked."

I was making my way about the room lost in admiration and envy. In value the collection would have dwarfed a king's ransom. I touched an object of purest ivory that was priceless; and by its side a bit of teakwood marvelously carved and worth a fortune. Major Bassett smiled a little solemnly.

"There are interesting stories attached to some of these things," he remarked. "I'll tell you of them later on."

A step sounded in the next room, and a black native servant entered. He was a queer being, with a lost look in his eyes that made him quite pathetic.

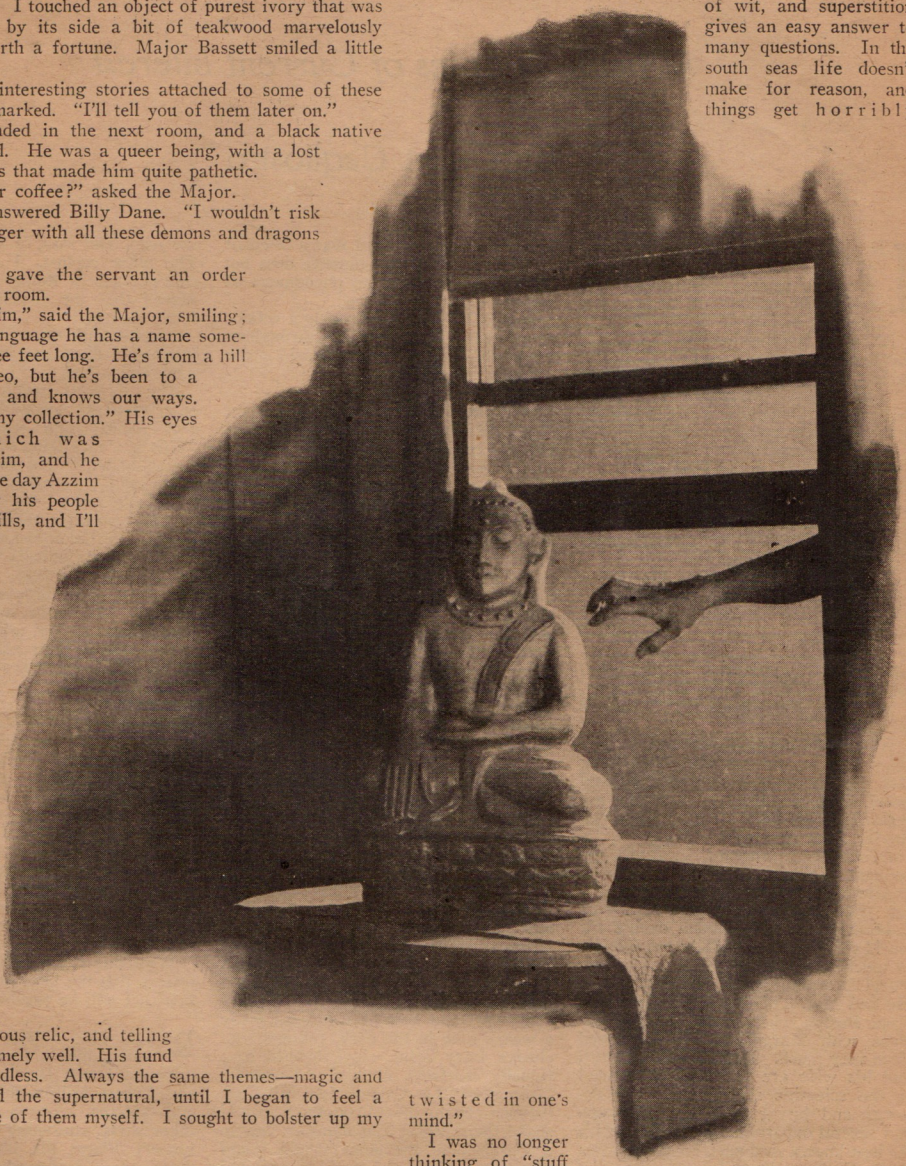
"Cocktails or coffee?" asked the Major.

"Coffee!" answered Billy Dane. "I wouldn't risk anything stronger with all these demons and dragons about!"

The Major gave the servant an order and he left the room.

"That's Azzim," said the Major, smiling; "in his own language he has a name something over three feet long. He's from a hill tribe in Borneo, but he's been to a British school and knows our ways. He's part of my collection." His eyes twinkled, which was strange for him, and he went on, "Some day Azzim will remember his people back in the hills, and I'll be picked up stabbed."

I gave him a sharp look, but no power of mine could tell whether he was in earnest or not. Soon we were reveling in Major Bassett's treasures. He guided us leisurely about, pointing out one article after another, handling it as a knight of old might handle a religious relic, and telling its story supremely well. His fund was simply endless. Always the same themes—magic and witchcraft and the supernatural, until I began to feel a dread and awe of them myself. I sought to bolster up my courage.



"SUPERSTITION!" I exclaimed. "Stuff and nonsense. Major Bassett, all of it! You tell it all so well it seems true."

His look became more grave, if that were possible. "I'm not sure it's stuff and nonsense, Miss Darrell. I've seen some things that are hard for a sober army man to explain. It's hard to talk of them, let alone trying to find an explanation."

I reclined at last upon the divan, overpowered by the glamor of his words. I had no thought of leaving now; my whole being was stirred and tense with mysterious currents awakened by my strange surroundings. Billy Dane was playing with a curved sword that had been used by a Mandan headsman, but Major Bassett paid no attention. He was speaking rather dreamily.

"You may be right, Miss Darrell; we army men are dull of wit, and superstition gives an easy answer to many questions. In the south seas life doesn't make for reason, and things get horribly twisted in one's mind."

I was no longer thinking of "stuff and nonsense."

"One sees so much of sudden, inexplicable change out there," he went on. "There's no such thing as cause and effect. An island rises overnight or disappears without reason; a mountain that has been like any other suddenly spits fire and smoke. Queer lights play in the heavens and a tribe is wiped out; or a monsoon comes and there is rejoicing."

"AND these things are the symbols." My gesture took in all the fantastic objects in that fantastic room.

"Symbols, perhaps—Miss Darrell. I tell you there are some things in this room of

(*Continued on page* 81)

SPIRIT TALES

Timely Topics of Current Interest

By Count Cagliostro

IN spite of the positive accusations of fraud made by the late Harry Houdini against "Margery," the celebrated medium of Boston, the mystery refuses to be solved.

Although Houdini became a pamphleteer in his war against fraudulent spiritualism, and devoted an entire booklet to explain how Margery's manifestations were accomplished, the explanations no longer seem to explain.

It will be remembered that Margery, (Mrs. Crandon) is the wife of a Harvard professor; that she very nearly won the *Scientific American* prize for psychical discovery, and that she has been a storm center ever since Houdini attacked her as a fraud.

Recently I pointed out to Houdini a report regarding Margery, in the *Journal of the American Society of Psychic Research*.

"See," I said, "according to these reports, your explanation of the phenomena won't hold water."

"She has a new trick that I haven't seen," said Houdini.

Now there comes a new and powerful voice in the discussion affirming that the ghosts and ringing bells and weird lights produced by Margery are real. It is the voice of a scientific authority from Australia.

Doctor R. J. Tillyard, F. R. S., the eminent biologist from the Cawthron Institute, New Zealand, and an honorary vice-president of the National Laboratory, visited London during his world tour and immediately put himself in touch with the Association for Psychical Research in Queensberry Place. He and Mrs. Tillyard had just arrived from Boston where they had two sittings with Margery which impressed them very much. Both Doctor Tillyard and his wife are extremely interested in the scientific side of psychical research and during their stay in Europe had several opportunities of sitting with the best-known mediums, including Miss Stella C., Evan Powell, etc.

On July 6th Doctor Tillyard gave the members of the National Laboratory a most interesting talk on "Some Recent Personal Experiences with Margery," illustrated by means of lantern slides. The lecture hall was uncomfortably crowded with members and friends who were rewarded by hearing detailed personal records of the Margery phenomena by a brilliant lecturer.

Many distinguished persons were present, including Lady Grey of Fallodon; and Doctor Tillyard's vivid account of the Margery phenomena created a very deep impression. Even the sceptics present realized that a scientist of Doctor Tillyard's eminence does not lightly set his *cachet* to phenomena of dubious origin.

Doctor Tillyard is preparing a volume on his psychic experiences throughout the world—a book which should prove intensely interesting.

THE death of Emile Coue at Nancy, on July 2nd, at the age of seventy, robs the world of a man whose amazing success was in the main the influence of a personality—gentle, unselfish, and sincere. He spoke so quietly and triumphantly about the power of man's imagination to drive away all weakness from the body that thousands were cured of real ailments solely through the potent effect of auto-suggestion. He had so often charmed away the weaknesses of others by his soothing, *"Ca passe, ca passe,"* that it came as a shock to us to learn that death had at last claimed the great healer. Though Coue is dead, his influence for good will not quickly pass away. He died from heart failure caused by over-work.

THERE are still many places in the world where people believe in fairies.

Cornwall, England, both north and south, is rich in legend and superstition, though with the advance of materialism these are fast dying out. It is around the pixies that the great mass of Cornish folk-belief clings. Seventy or eighty years ago this belief seemed practically universal. Indeed, the grandfather of one of our correspondents (himself a St. Minver man), often used to tell of the night that he was "pixy-led" and how he wandered many a weary mile in the dark, following an elusive fairy light, which bobbed continually in front of him. Naturally, "foreigners" (as Cornish folk call Englishmen from other counties) would shake their heads, and murmur, but to a Cornishman the story would sound perfectly natural, and would be accepted as true.

THE DAILY EXPRESS of London says the following remarkable story was given to its representative on August 16th "concerning"—(not by)—"a man of impeccable honesty of thought, and accurate to a minute degree in his ordinary recollection and descripiton:"—

"He was coming out of a theater and saw a man whom, as far as any of his friends with him knew, he could never have seen before. Recollection, however, came to him. He strode over to the man, and said, 'I killed you once.' The other replied, 'I remember, in a chariot race in Rome.' The first man agreed that the recollection was perfectly correct."

I agree with the editor of *The Two Worlds* in discussing this story with a wink and a nod.

The *Express* swallows this pretty story, told at second-hand, with perfect facility and says sententiously, "This is a surprising instance of double remembrance!" An intelligent schoolboy would have asked for the address of at least one of the alleged witnesses of this romantic encounter. Also, he would have been anxious to meet the two living principals in this stirring tragedy of long ago. And he would thereupon have proceeded to question the two gentlemen separately on the other facts, if any, which happened to remain within their mutual recollection of their contemporary life in ancient times.

SIR OLIVER LODGE, preaching to members of the British Association at Oxford recently, said that Lord Balfour had held out the augury that there would soon be some new great revolution in science. But in what direction would that occur? "If I am to make a guess," said Sir Oliver, "I would say that, whereas all through the nineteenth century and up to the present time we have been dealing chiefly with the material world, there now lies before us the discovery of the spiritual world."

With this I am inclined to agree. I believe that the next great discovery of mankind will be psychical in character.

RECENTLY I had luncheon in the Lotus Club, in New York. At our table sat Owen Davis, the playwright, and Robert Milton, the great producer and director. Across the way sat another party, consisting of James Montgomery Flagg, the illustrator, two or three others, and a good-looking Hindu youth.

The latter was Krisknamurti, the Theosophic visitor now in this country.

I studied him carefully—I am afraid, even impudently. He was free from self-consciousness, a youth with a winning smile, a confident address—and something else in those dark and luminous eyes. What was that light in his eyes? Being so near to Krisknamurti made him seem an infinitely more reasonable figure.

Have you read his interviews with the New York newspaper men? He gave them as good as they sent. He

seems to possess a thoroughly individualized viewpoint. His words have the ring of common sense—of conviction, sincerity and simplicity.

GHOSTS I HAVE SEEN

Writing under the above title in the Sunday edition of the London *Express*, Viscountess Massereene-Ferrard relates the following remarkable experience:—

I was driving back one moonlit evening with my husband after a long day with the hounds, and it must have been about six o'clock, as we had stopped to have tea with some friends of ours who lived about ten miles from our place, *Oriel Temple*.

We were proceeding quietly along, when I noticed about a hundred yards in front of us a man in a pink coat on a gray horse. I turned to Lord Massereene and said: "There's someone as late as we are. Do you know who it is?"

"There is no one there," replied my husband, "at least, I can see no one."

Suddenly the man, who, despite the fact that we were motoring and he was riding, had been keeping the same distance in front of us, fell back, and as we drew closer to him I was able to see that his pink coat was cut in the fashion of some centuries ago, and that he wore a hat of the same period and a full-bottomed wig.

By this time Lord Massereene was convinced that I was seeing an apparition. Presently we passed a man and a dog. The man obviously did not see the stranger on the gray horse, for he pursued his way along the middle of the road until we reached him, then turned to one side to let us pass.

The dog saw something, however, for the gray horse reared as it passed, and the dog fled away, howling.

Then for a time the stranger vanished. Presently I saw him again, this time beside us, with his face turned away. Then, as we arrived at our lodge gates, he pulled up his horse and looked me straight in the face as we drove in.

All this time my husband and the chauffeur had seen nothing, and though the former asked me a great many questions about the apparition, he made no comment.

Two days later Lord Massereene proposed that I should motor up with him to *Antrim Castle*, his other family place, where we had not lived since I married, but which was very much older and had been in his family 300 years longer than our then abode.

When we arrived he took me straight to the dining room and pointed to a large oil painting over the fire-place.

I gasped. It was the picture of the man I had seen riding the gray horse two days before, and incidentally was a portrait of the second Lord Massereene.

I turned to my husband. "Then you knew who it was all the time?" I said.

"Yes," he replied. "And though I have never seen him myself, I am not surprised that he should have appeared to you, as various people have seen him at different times. But what does surprise me is that you should have seen him down at *Oriel Temple*, for in his lifetime that property had not come into our possession."

This story, however, has a sequel.

Several years after, when we were living at *Antrim Castle*, Lord Massereene came into my sitting-room one morning while I was writing and said: "I have come across some rather interesting information. I have been turning out a chest full of old documents, and have come upon an old charter granting to my ancestor, whom you saw on his gray horse, the actual land you saw him riding on, which stretched from where you first saw him to where the lodge gates of *Oriel Temple* are now."

To my mind only survival after death can explain this vision.

A NEW play about ghosts has recently had all London by the ears. Early in the summer it made its debut at the Everyman Theater, Hampstead, where it appeared under the name of *The Twin*, the piece having been written by Vere Sullivan and George Brenchley.

Before the action of the play proper begins, we are shown a prologue in which certain important matters are established.

In this prologue we are told that a certain Reverend Lothian Maitland had married a girl who, in the early years of their wedded bliss, developed mediumistic powers. The Vicar's congregation complain to the Bishop, who informs the "erring" wife (Miss Sybil Arundale) that she must give up her mediumship.

The wife refuses, and quarrels with her husband, whom she leaves with three young children—an elder girl, and boy-and-girl twins. The elder girl is not mediumistic, but the Vicar is warned that Pearl, the girl twin, is psychic—a statement he disbelieves. The boy is killed in the Great War.

The play opens with an intensive campaign by the Reverend Lothian Maitland against the spiritualistic lectures of "Sylvia Brent," the famous medium—his wife, of course. Pearl visits the medium, who does not reveal her identity, but encourages her daughter to develop her mediumship in order that the girl may meet her dead brother, Roddy. Mr. James Agate (in the *Sunday Times*) finishes the story in his review as follows:

"Roddy, it appears, has spoken to Pearl and has promised to materialize as soon as she becomes more expert. Now you must understand that the Vicar took his strong line against the spirits, not because he believed so little in them that he deemed them humbugs, but because he believed so much that he knew all about them and their most intimate particularities down to the fact that they were emanations of the Evil One.

At this point the Vicar's wife intervened to warn him about their daughter. Pearl, she declared, being a medium, was in great danger from her father's mania for exorcism. For if you were nice to a spirit the spirit would not do the medium any harm, but if you were nasty the spirit would do all the harm it could.

"Most opportunely one of the Vicar's choir-boys became 'possessed.' The Vicar promptly exorcised the inhabiting devil, whereupon the boy went raving mad and died. Did this teach the Vicar a lesson? Not a bit of it. He promptly exorcised his daughter's familiar, whereupon the girl nearly died on the spot, afterwards falling into a long illness. When she recovered there was a battle royal between the father and the mother as to whether the girl should continue to exercise her faculty, the mother saying that it would be all right if she didn't do it in the dark, and the father declaring that he wouldn't have it at any time of day.

Then the spirit of Roddy took a hand, appeared when it was not bidden, and invited Pearl to throw herself out of the window, which she did. Whereupon another clergyman, himself a medium, who had been brought in by the Vicar to help, evoked the spirit of Roddy, who obligingly appeared and straightway confessed that he was not Roddy at all, but an emissary of the Devil who wanted Pearl's soul for himself."

In commenting upon the production, the *Journal of the American Society for Psychic Research* had the following to say:

"On July 9th, Miss Sybil Arundale gave a special *matinee* of the play and invited many prominent spiritualists to witness it, afterwards asking for criticisms on the part of the audience—an invitation which was accepted with alacrity, Mr. E. P. Hewitt, K. C., being the chief protagonist.

"As a play, the piece is excellent; as subtle propaganda, it is ineffective; as a piece of logical or scientific reasoning it is ridiculous. If there be a moral to the story it is that a man has no right to be a parson who is so stupid as to use towards his daughter the same methods which have already succeeded in killing a choir-boy!"

VERY few people, even among those living in the metropolis, know that there is a miracle shrine in the heart of New York City.

We are referring to *L'Eglise de Notre Dame*, a French catholic church on Morningside Heights, nestling near the huge shadow of the unfinished *Cathedral of St. John the Divine*.

The bearded priests of this little French church perform their masses and other devotions among most unusual surroundings. The rear wall of the church is the side of the cliff there—a piece of the virgin rock, undisturbed in its native setting—the walls of the church having been built out from it.

There the altar is, and before the altar burn many hundred gleaming ecclesiastical candles. The light from all these tapers rises flutteringly to a niche, carved in the rock—a niche in which is placed a statue of Mary. This is the miracle shrine, and in mute confirmation of the miracles that have been accomplished by prayer there, you will behold crutches—the discarded crutches of devotees who were healed at the shrine, hanging upon the rock.

THIS present day belief in miracles is spreading: it is all over the world. Italy, at the time of writing, is seething with miracles and miracle-mongers. The villagers of Quarto Disoccavo, near Naples, are particularly excited over what they regard as the miraculous treatment of diseases by a local priest, Don Luigi Garofalo.

More than 100 cases, ranging from tuberculosis to paralysis and from toothache to broken limbs, are stated to have been treated successfully by this priest with a special earth found near Pozzuoli (on the coast near Naples). The earth is either taken in the form of pills or applied externally to the injured part.

The priest's fame has spread rapidly throughout the province and his house has become the object of numerous pilgrimages by people suffering from all sorts of diseases. Thousands of ailing Italians surround the house night and day acclaiming his treatment.

Recently, when the priest visited Naples, he was recognized and became the center of such a commotion that the police had to interfere and escort him back to his village. He explains his success by saying that man being dust, certain earths have curative properties. The priest has never accepted payment for his treatment.

Mussolini, Premier of Italy, becoming alarmed at the extent to which alleged phenomenal happenings are spreading, has now issued an order by which very stringent measures may be taken against those who have been connected with such occurrences.

A TEN-YEAR-OLD Indian boy credited with magical powers and reputed to be a saint is mystifying a number of people in Colombo, Ceylon. Strange stories are current with regard to miraculous feats in stopping of trains, tram-cars, and busses, and it is stated that when the boy was put off a tram-car for not paying his fare, he did not allow the car to proceed for half an hour.

The boy is the son of a former Cochin high priest, and has received many gifts in Colombo. A well-known Mohammedan jeweler presented him with a very valuable watch. The boy, whose name is Sayed Ahamed Koya Thangal, rode off with a bicycle from Colombo. This was immediately paid for by an influential Mohammedan.

A story went the rounds in this case that he hypnotized a European assistant, who handed over the bicycle to him.

The Mystery of Houdini's Death

(*Continued from page 29*)

I return from my tour, and we get the chance to have another talk, I will show it to you. Meanwhile, keep to yourself what you know."

"Thanks," I replied. "And good-bye. I wish you good luck."

That was the last personal conversation I ever had with Houdini, although I believe I received the last letter that he ever wrote, only a few hours before he was stricken. Meanwhile, Houdini took his show to Boston, where he had a successful run with his presentation of conjuring, sleight-of-hand, illusions and spiritistic exposes.

We corresponded in a desultory way until Houdini reached Albany. One morning I read the following notice in the paper:

HARRY HOUDINI HURT DOING ACT IN THEATER

Albany, October 12. (By. U. P.)—Harry Houdini, the magician, has an incomplete fracture of one of the bones of the left foot, received last night when a 200-pound weight slipped and fell on his foot during one of his acts. The muscles of the foot and other bones also were badly bruised but his manager said today Houdini would appear at the theater tonight, as usual.

Naturally I read this with the utmost concern for my friend, and immediately sent him a telegram and a letter of condolence.

Meanwhile there came a startling development!

ON the following day I received the following letter from Alice A. Wood, a medium, who was, for years, secretary to Doctor Prince, then principal research officer of the American Society for Psychic Research.

Under date of October 13th, 1926, this is what Mrs. Wood wrote to me:

> Three years ago, Doctor Hyslop (meaning the spirit of Doctor Hyslop; Ed. Note) said to J. Malcolm Bird of the Psychical Research Society:
>
> "The waters are black for Houdini," and he predicted that disaster would befall him while performing before an audience in a theater.
>
> Doctor Hyslop now says that *the injury is more serious than has been reported and that Houdini's days as a magician are over!*

To this Mrs. Wood signed her name.

I will confess that I put very little stock in this weird prediction then. Of such little consequence did it seem to me that I was on the point of enclosing it in a second letter that I was sending to Houdini. But I did not do this, for however great a materialist a man may be, he should not be shown such a prediction about himself while trying to recover from an injury. Thus Houdini died never having seen it.

All the world knows how he died. But this is the first time I have divulged this unmistakable diagnosis and prediction of the end, made by a spirit medium, more than a hundred miles away at the time.

The whole chain of circumstances seem more unbelievable every time I reflect upon them. In reply to my letter Houdini sent me a note from the Van Curler Theater, in Schenectady, under date of October 15th, as follows:

> Dear Samri:—Thanks for your wire. I have "only" an interior fracture of the ankle, etc., etc.

Now this note is important, because it demonstrates that Houdini, himself had no intimation or suspicion of how serious was his injury, two days after Mrs. Wood had declared that the injury was much worse than was supposed, and that it would permanently end the magician's career.

FROM Montreal Houdini did not write to me, but there have been numerous stories published that he was struck in the side in a friendly encounter there. One story had it that the blow was delivered by an over enthusiastic college youth; another made a jocose newspaper man the one who struck. Both stories have subsequently been denied.

I had written to Houdini in care of the Garrick Theater in Detroit, and when he arrived there on Sunday he found my letter waiting for him. In his dressing room he typed me a note in which he stated that he hoped to go to Toledo and have a séance with Ada Bessinet. Here again is evidence that he had no real suspicion that his days were numbered.

A few hours afterward he was stricken and taken to the hospital from which he never emerged alive.

All of this correspondence I have preserved with the utmost care because I consider it of first-rate scientific importance. Those who have followed my occasional contributions to the subject of psychism realize that my attitude has been, not that of the scoffer, but more of the skeptic who would like to be convinced. One swallow, of course, does not make a summer, but this episode is startling enough, in all conscience, to make a man think.

In the meantime, there has come another development which is worth recording. In Toledo there lives a man who has been one of the most pronounced and vociferous opponents of all things psychic. He is a conjurer, a man who has given many public exhibitions, and who has found some curious satisfaction in imitating the feats of fakirs, in addition to the usual sleight-of-hand feats. Also he has attacked and exposed the pseudo-spiritistic illusions. His name is Robert F. Gysel. On the day following the death of Houdini, I received the following letter from Mr. Gysel:

> Mr. Frikell:—Something happened to me in my room Sunday night, October 24, 1926, 10.58. Houdini gave me a picture of himself which I had framed and hung up on the wall.
>
> At the above date and time picture fell to the floor, breaking glass. I told this to 2,000 railroad men at the Labor Temple October 29, 1926. I now know that Houdini will die. Maybe there is something to this psychic phenomena after all.
>
> GYSEL

As I think back upon my own experience, I am inclined to agree with the sleight-of-hand man in Toledo.

Maybe there is indeed something to this psychic phenomena after all!

The Haunt of Medusa Ridge

(*Continued from page 11*)

and he could not escape her weird spell.

In time his infatuation turned to hatred—and the more he hated her the stronger grew her power over him. His will seemed to die when she turned her eyes upon him, and he became plastic, yielding to her last desires—hating her impotently all the while.

THEN one night Zuleida gathered a party of her intimates and motored down to Medusa Ridge where many mad festivities were held. Before midnight every member of the group had reached the furthest stages of intoxication. "A cheap, drunken crowd," one of the servants later described this party, on the witness stand.

In the course of the early morning hours a bitter quarrel broke out between Zuleida and the unhappy Julian. When it ended—Zuleida was dead, Julian seriously wounded.

Of course an inquest was held, but the evidence was confused, and contradictory. No one knew who had had pistols. No one knew who had fired the shots. The sordid affair was hushed up, and Julian Grantham rose from his sickbed a changed and chastened man.

The house at Medusa Ridge was closed permanently. Dancers, cafes and wild parties all became relegated to the realm of memory in his life. He devoted himself to his business, and, as the years slipped by, he became an important figure among the cotton-mill financiers.

Ten years after Zuleida's death he met Vivian Clyde, beautiful and charming. It was a real love match on both sides. They married, and for a few months they were ideally happy.

The trouble started when we came down here," moaned Martha. "Miss Vivie liked the ocean, and suggested opening this house for the summer. Oh, if we'd only stayed in the city, if we'd gone anywhere but here!"

"Tell me everything," I implored.

"At first we didn't know what it was," Martha went on. "We both felt there was something wrong with the place, and Mr. Julian turned queer almost as soon as we arrived here. Miss Vivie had found him standing in the library with a big silver-framed picture in his hand, white and shaking, and with a strange, dazed look in his eyes.

"Of course, Miss Vivie guessed at once whose picture it was. She was greatly distressed. 'Maybe we did wrong to come here,' she said to me. 'It has stirred unhappy memories in Mr. Julian's mind.'

"'If I was you,' I said, 'I'd burn that picture the first thing I did.' Miss Vivie laughed scornfully. 'I'm not afraid of any picture,' she replied. 'Julian loves *me*. He never loved that woman, and her picture can't hurt me.'

"It was like a challenge. The way she said it, was as if the challenge was taken up. Ever since then it's been a fight to win the man's soul, between a living woman and a dead one, and I think the dead woman is winning."

"How Martha?" I asked her quickly.

She went on as if she had not heard. "They didn't go back to the city. Miss Vivie suggested it, but Mr. Julian demurred. He said he had some business here that would keep him a few days, and so it dragged on. I think at first Mr. Julian felt the influence of the dead dancer, and was afraid of being a coward if he ran away. He wanted to fight it and overcome it, but, instead, he succumbed almost at once.

"As I said, at first we didn't know what it was. Mr. Julian kept getting queerer and queerer. He'd have spells when he'd sit and look straight ahead of him for hours at a time. If anyone spoke to him, he'd either not answer, or he'd act dazed, like a person awakening from a sleep, and his replies were either incoherent, or foolish.

"And he seemed possessed to look at that picture! I've watched him over and over. He'd enter the hall, and it seemed as though something would catch him and force him into the library. I've seen him time and time again, turn and try to walk away, and, after a few steps, hesitate, stop, and slowly . . . slowly drag one foot after the other into the library, where he'd stand a long time gazing at that evil photograph.

"For a while, I thought the picture was doing it all, and I begged and prayed Miss Vivie to burn it. Miss Vivie is proud in her way and she said Mr. Julian must choose between the picture and her—and she knew he'd choose *her*.

"Then one evening I saw her. It was just at twilight, and as I came along the hall, I saw something like a column of mist near the dining-room. Then I saw two eyes staring at me, and I knew what it was. For when she first came back that's what she was like—just mist, with two staring, evil eyes. She's grown stronger since then."

"Martha, what do you mean?"

"Miss Ellis, I don't feel so afraid, now I'm talking to you. I'll tell you what I've thought about it, that I haven't dared to put into words. There was something of her here that had the power to dominate Mr. Julian's memory so that he could think of nothing but her, and the more he thought of her, the stronger she grew. In life she was bitterly jealous of him, and couldn't bear to have him look at another woman, and her spirit feels the same way now, so that she's bound to take him from his wife.

"It's as though she was feeding herself on Miss Vivie—like those vampires you read about. The weaker Miss Vivie gets, the stronger she grows. Every time I see her, she is materialized a little more completely. From mist and a pair of eyes she has grown into the figure you saw tonight that you thought was human. Where is it going to end? Oh, God! Where is it going to end?"

Conviction was growing in my mind, and growing with it was a dull horror. Incredible as it might seem, impossible as it must be—it was true. Martha was

no raving mad creature. She was intelligent—a brave, sorely harassed woman, telling me in a straight-forward fashion those incidents of which she had a clear and convincing cognizance.

"How do you suppose Mr. Grantham feels when he sees her?" I asked.

"Miss Ellis,"—Martha looked me straight in the eye—"I tell you, positively, *Mr. Julian has never seen her!*"

At my exclamation she shook her head emphatically. "No, nor Miss Vivie either. For some reason she can't appear to either of them. In a different way they are conscious of her, but they can't see her. That's what terrifies Miss Vivie. She knows when she's near, and she feels cold and faint, and terribly fearful, as though some evil power was working to do her harm. That's what she's always watching for. She expects momentarily that the phantom will appear to her, and she is convinced that when it does, it will mean her death."

I shuddered. I understood now—the look in those imploring eyes.

"But I'm sure she can only influence Mr. Julian mentally," Martha continued. I've seen her wind her arms around his neck and lay her head on his shoulder and he sitting like a marble statue staring straight before him. He's getting worse all the time and she can somehow make him think of her, and dull his will, but she can't make him conscious of her as an entity—not yet. But God only knows what she may be able to do eventually, if this keeps up!"

I THOUGHT of the scene I had witnessed in the shadow-filled dining room, and mentally corroborated Martha's opinion. Mr. Grantham was not conscious of the dancer as an entity—not yet!

But what could I do? How could one fight a spirit? I was as helpless as Martha herself. It was Martha's reiterated statement that pointed to an imminent danger. "She's growing stronger; she'll kill Miss Vivie and drag Mr. Julian . . . where?"

We dared not conjecture. But somehow, by some means, we must save this unhappy pair from the horror that lay before them.

I sent Martha away at last, calmed by the knowledge that her fears and responsibilities were shared, and alone in my room I strove to formulate some plan of action. It was useless. How does one war against phantoms? I was increasingly conscious that danger threatened this household, but what form it might take I was unable to imagine. Martha's words kept ringing in my ears: "She's growing stronger . . . like those vampires . . . the weaker Miss Vivie gets, the stronger she grows."

By means of the telephone in the hall I sent my daily report to Doctor Rogers, through the local telegraph office. My report that evening consisted of only seven words:

"You are urgently needed. Come at once."

That night I spent lying sleepless on the couch in Mrs. Grantham's room. I was determined that hereafter my vigil should be unceasing. Every apparition of which I had ever heard had appeared in the hours of darkness. If Zuleida tried to make her presence known to Mrs. Grantham, I intended to be on hand.

THE following morning dawned bright and beautiful and no apparition had appeared. A million sparkles of light danced upon the floor of the bay. The scent of honeysuckle drifted in through the open window. The crackle of a lawn mower sounded a cheerful note through the freshness of the morning. The busy, normal life of the world awoke. I had a feeling that last night's incidents were part of a nightmare from which I had awakened, free from every taint of fear. Ghosts, specters, spirits? Bah! Who cared about them on a morning like this?

I turned to Mrs. Grantham's bedside. She lay—obviously weaker. She was almost spent with her struggle, but bravely fighting on. "I'll rest for a while," she said, "if Mr. Grantham asks for me tell him to come to my room."

I went down stairs where a servant showed me the breakfast room. Mr. Grantham did not appear and I breakfasted alone.

A little later I received a reply to my telegram. It read as follows:

"Doctor Rogers attending a conference at Atlantic City. Your message forwarded."

It was signed by the doctor's secretary. This was a disappointment, but it did not affect me deeply at the moment. In the sunshine of that blue and gold June morning, I felt able to cope with all the powers of darkness that night could ever unloose.

WHEN I returned to my patient, I found Mrs. Grantham nervous and restless, with a rising temperature. She asked for her husband, at once:

"How is Mr. Grantham this morning? Do you think he looks ill? Will you find him, and tell him I want to see him?"

I did what I could to make her comfortable, and I then went in search of this strange husband who apparently did not care enough for his sick wife to make even one inquiry about her condition. I was indignant, and I meant Mr. Grantham should know it.

He was in the library, seated before the desk which held the detestable photograph of the dancer, but he was not looking at it. He was sitting bent over, his hands hanging loosely between his knees, his gaze fixed on the floor in an attitude of deepest dejection.

He did not look up as I entered, and I addressed him without formality.

"Mr. Grantham, I think you ought to know that your wife is seriously ill. I have sent for Doctor Rogers, and I shall not feel at ease until he arrives. Mrs. Grantham is asking for you now."

He did not change his attitude, nor raise his eyes. He only repeated dully, "Mrs. Grantham?" And again after a pause, as if the name was unfamiliar, "Mrs. Grantham?"

There was something unnatural and appalling in his lethargy. In spite of myself I felt again the creeping horror of the night before. There was something terribly wrong with this man, and with a shudder I wondered if a figure stood beside him, invisible in the daylight, with a long white arm twined about his neck.

Fighting back my fancies, I tried again: "Do you understand, Mrs. Grantham is very ill, and wants you? Come with me."

I grasped his arm, and he rose and followed me into the hall.

As I turned to the staircase he said in the same dull tone: "I will come in a moment," and slipped out of the double door to the veranda. I did not follow him. I felt that it would be better if his wife did not see him in his present condition. I returned to her room, and told her that Mr. Grantham had gone out, and she did not ask for him again.

AFTER mid-day the weather changed. Thick clouds covered the sun, and the air grew sultry. Thunder began to rumble in the distance. Mrs. Grantham expressed a desire to rest upon the couch before the open window, and when the change was made she seemed to fall asleep.

The room grew darker, the air heavier. A tempest was surely coming, but it was gathering force slowly. The heavy air oppressed me, and I grew drowsy as a result of my sleepless night.

I examined my patient attentively. She lay white and beautiful, deep in sleep. I summoned Martha, and asked her to sit by her mistress, while I rested for an hour in my own room.

As I lay down upon my bed the last thing of which I was conscious was the ominous rumble of distant thunder.

A wild shriek pierced my slumbers. Then came a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a crash like the shock of meeting armies. My shuttered room was dark, and in the confusion I could not think for a moment where I was.

Then I heard Martha scream, and cry out frantically: "Miss Ellis! For God's sake, come quick! She's dying!"

I ran hurriedly to Mrs. Grantham's room.

The tempest was at its height, and the room almost dark except when the vivid lightning flashes brought every detail into sharp relief. By one of these flashes I saw Mrs. Grantham, gasping for breath, writhing and struggling, on the couch. The poor woman was plucking feebly at her throat, with her frail, impotent hands, choking horribly.

As I raised her and tried to draw her hands away, I felt another pair of strong muscular hands clasped tightly about the neck of the suffocating woman! I let out a loud shriek. I know I was never so near fainting in my life. As Martha snapped on the light, Mrs. Grantham dropped back on the pillow unconscious, and I fell on my knees beside the bed. I couldn't stand. In my sick brain one sentence beat and throbbed like a huge pulse. "God knows what she may be able to do! God knows what she may be able to do!"

This, then, was what she was able to do.

As the dimness left my eyes, and my brain ceased to throb my first thought was for my patient. Like one dead she lay, stark and livid under the electric light. I feared that death had clutched her in his tightening grip.

From Martha's incoherent mutterings I

gathered that she had sat quietly by Mrs. Grantham for nearly an hour, while the sky became more and more thickly obscured, and the room grew darker. While the rumblings of the thunder grew heavier she had grown drowsy, for Martha, too, had spent an almost sleepless night.

Then she must have fallen into a doze, for suddenly she was awakened by a loud crash. She could see Zuleida standing by Mrs. Grantham's couch, her evil eyes shining like phosphorus in the dimness. Then, as vivid flashes of lightning illuminated the room, she saw the dancer bend over and clutch Mrs. Grantham's throat, her thumbs pressing against the windpipe.

BETWEEN us we got the unconscious woman into the bed, and then I prepared to face the night. The storm was passing over now, and the room was growing lighter, but we kept all the lights turned on. If Zuleida was powerful only in the darkness, I meant that there should be no darkness.

Then, because recollection of old ghost stories came to my mind, where lights were mysteriously darkened, I resolved not to trust to the electric lights alone. I procured candles and matches from the cook, and surreptitiously borrowed a large flashlight which I observed lying on a table near the basement entrance.

Then Martha and I took up our vigil. Throughout the evening and the whole night we sat on either side of the bed, prepared to battle against we knew not what. It was the longest night of my life. Motionless, and almost lifeless, Mrs. Grantham lay in a blaze of light. I arranged a shield for her eyes, though no rays could cause her discomfort, but elsewhere there was not a shadow in the room. Candles flared in every corner, and these I renewed from time to time as they burned low.

As the hours dragged by Martha nodded in her chair, but I never closed an eye. Indeed, sleep was far from me. A strong excitement was upon me. I felt that a crisis was close at hand. Somehow Mrs. Grantham must be saved from the doom that the fiend from another world had designated for her. Somehow Mr. Grantham must be rescued from the insanity that threatened to engulf him. My brain worked ceaselessly as I tried to devise methods. But how can a mortal cope with an earth-bound spirit? Over and over in my thoughts I fell back upon the one hope that glimmered through the darkness of this ill-fated house—Doctor Rogers.

Slowly the hours wore on. Midnight sounded and in solemn procession the small hours passed into eternity. Dawn came, pale and pearl-hued, to bring its blessing to the earth. And nothing happened. No visitor from across the border would cross our threshold. No specter murderess brought us panic. Yet it was not until the sunshine was pouring a golden flood into the room that we finally extinguished the artificial lights.

Not for one moment did we relax our vigilance. Martha went to the kitchen for her breakfast, and brought a tray to me. Then she resumed her station by the bed. Mrs. Grantham was in a very serious condition, her pulse hardly discernible, her breathing imperceptible. Although I did not feel it safe to leave her, yet twice in the course of the morning, I was forced to leave the room.

The first time was in response to a telephone call from the telegraph office. A message had arrived from Doctor Rogers to the effect that he would arrive at Medusa Ridge on the five o'clock train. Never did a telephone message bring me greater relief than that. I returned to the sick-room with a feeling that our troubles were soon to be ended. I was wrong.

The second summons came through a maid, saying that the butler wished to see me, if I would be so kind as to step down to the library. I went down and found the man distressed and nervous.

"Mr. Grantham is in a very strange state, Miss," he said. "I wish you'd just take a look at him. Being a nurse you might suggest something to do for him, or tell me if I ought to get a doctor."

I followed the man upstairs with a sinking heart. I felt some new catastrophe was now at hand, and it seemed to me I had no more strength to meet it.

MR. Grantham's room was a large, pleasant apartment, simply furnished. It had three windows overlooking the bay, and before one of these, with his back toward it, he was huddled, wrapped in a dark dressing gown. He was seated as I had seen him the day before, bent far over, his hands hanging between his knees. He did not move as we entered the room, nor appear to take any notice of the man who spoke to him in an anxious voice.

"Mr. Grantham, Mr. Grantham, don't you know me, sir? It's Willetts, sir. Won't you speak to me?"

There was no response from the huddled creature, whose head hung down on his chest. "Oh, Miss Ellis," cried the man, "—what is the matter with him? I found him like this early in the morning, and he hasn't moved since."

"Lift him," I said, "I want to see his face."

And then I recoiled as Willetts raised the figure upright, and I saw the face. That dreadful face! A face from which all life and intelligence had departed. A face that might have belonged to a congenital idiot, with its slack jaw and vacant eyes. The face of one whose mind was gone!

I went back to Martha with the tears running down my face. I think I realized fully, for the first time, the awfulness of the malignant power working against these two helpless people. And I was as helpless as they. I didn't know what to do. The little knowledge I had gained as a nurse, and of which I had been so proud, meant less than nothing now.

There was only one thing I *could* do. I could pray. Over and over again I raised my petition. "Oh, God, don't let anything else happen till Doctor Rogers comes."

The day wore on. Deeper and deeper grew the atmosphere of apprehension that overhung the whole house. It seemed as though an almost tangible gloom enveloped us. The servants crept

about whispering. In his room the pitiful automaton that had been Mr. Grantham sat motionless, as though held in thrall. Mrs. Grantham lay like one in a trance, steadily growing weaker.

I now began to realize fully for the first time that both were under an evil spell and if it were not broken, both would die.

AT last Doctor Rogers came. His car drew up to the door, just as the sun declining toward the west turned the whole harbor into a sheet of liquid gold. Against that glowing background, the doorway of the house showed black like the entrance to a tomb. I ushered him in, and then we told our tale, Martha beginning it, and I taking up the narrative at the point where I entered the house. Doctor Rogers listened in silence, his face growing graver and graver as we proceeded.

He examined the patients, making a long and critical examination in each case.

"Mr. Grantham," he said, "is in a state of hypnosis—how induced, I cannot tell. I believe I can overcome that. Mrs. Grantham's condition is less easy to diagnose. Her deep sleep may result from a variety of causes. I am convinced that there are super-physical conditions here, and I can only meet them on a physical plane. There is a force or a presence here, which materializes itself in the guise of the first Mrs. Grantham. This must be eliminated. To save the life of our patients, I believe we must eliminate it before darkness falls."

He looked out to where the rim of the sun was already sinking toward the floor of the bay. "We have no precedents to guide us, no authorities to follow. How shall we deal with a malevolent force, incorporeal and beyond physical laws?"

He was silent for a long time. The sun dipped lower and the glow faded from the room. At last he arose and came over to the bedside.

"We can but try," he said. "Twilight is at hand. It is the hour when the earth-bound spirits find it is easiest to materialize. Miss Ellis, you have shown that you have courage. Do not fail me now."

"I will do anything," I exclaimed, "to help these poor tortured souls."

"Good," he said briefly, "get Martha and wait here 'til I return.

I summoned Martha who took her seat by the bedside. I placed myself on the other side, and in a moment Doctor Rogers returned, leading Mr. Grantham, who shuffled along beside him like a blind man. What treatment the doctor had given him, I cannot tell, but while he was still dazed and unconscious of our presence the horrible vacancy was gone from his face.

He sank into a chair near the foot of the bed, and leaned back with his eyes closed. Doctor Rogers stood in front of him. "My whole experiment depends upon whether or not the phantom materializes," he said. "It is evident that her desire is to get possession of Mr. Grantham. She is not conscious of us any more than he is conscious of her.

"I am going to hypnotize him deeply, and if she appears he will command her to vanish forever. I believe it is the only way we can banish her from the house, the only way that we can save Mrs. Grantham's life. But I am not so psychic as some men of my profession. I shall not be able to see her if she comes. I must depend upon you and Martha to tell me if she appears and what she does in her materialized form.

"You need not be afraid of her. She has her limitations as we have ours. She is a powerful force which can operate only in a restricted area. No command of ours can reach her, but I believe that through Mr. Grantham she may be forever removed to her proper sphere. Now let us wait in silence to see if she appears."

Surely a stranger group, with a stranger purpose, was never formed. Slowly the colors in the western sky changed, deepened and were gone while the room grew shadowy with the coming of the night. Against the high back of the chair Mr. Grantham's face showed pale and haggard with closed eyes. Martha sat with her hands clasped and her lips moving in prayer. Mrs. Grantham lay like a carven figure on the bed. The doctor still stood in the middle of the room. His eyes were fixed on the door.

SUDDENLY there was another figure in the room—a woman, her slanting, narrow eyes fixed upon Mr. Grantham.

"She is here," I said in a low voice, "—right there beside you, Doctor."

He turned this way and that, but to him the woman was wholly invisible. For some minutes she stood, her gaze concentrated on Julian Grantham's pale face, then she bent over and touched his closed eyelids with her fingertips.

He did not move, and baffled, she turned to regard the room. Her gaze fell upon the motionless figure on the bed. For a long moment her eyes flowed green like a cat's, then stealthily she glided forward, and with a spring she bounded to the bed, her hands locked about Mrs. Grantham's throat.

"Quick, Doctor," I screamed, "—she's choking her!" I flung myself—upon air. There was no substance to her figure, but I could feel her hands and I tore at them madly for a brief instant.

Then they too were gone. Doctor Rogers had passed a hand before Mr. Grantham's eyes and whispered a word in his ear. Mr. Grantham stood erect and flung that word at the strangler: "Zuleida!"

It rang through the room like a clarion. She turned from the bed, stood straight and faced him while her eyes burned with an emerald fire. The doctor continued to whisper in the ear of the man who seemed to tower at the foot of the bed.

"Zuleida!" commanded Mr. Grantham in ringing tones, "you must go back. I do not love you, I do not want you! Go back to your own abode—cease to trouble me!"

The apparition stamped her foot, but there was no sound. Her lips curled back from her pointed teeth like a tiger's before the kill. A fury of hate and of rage stamped themselves upon her features and the sight of her seared itself upon my brain to remain there forever.

"Zuleida!" came the ringing voice again. "You are evil. I loathe you! You are vile. I sicken at your vileness! I command you—depart hence to your own place, and never come near me again!"

She beat her hands together in fury, but her eyes grew less brilliant. Slowly her outline became vague, slowly her hateful features were blurred. Before my eyes she was disintegrating—vanishing. Yet to the end she strove to withstand his command. Again and again the light flamed in her eyes and her outline became plain—only to fade, wraith-like, after each effort.

She was only a mist now, with two burning eyes dully gleaming with green fire, and at Julian's last vigorous: "Go! go—and never return!" it faded into nothingness.

DOCTOR ROGERS again passed his hand before Julian Grantham's face. The man seemed transformed. He gazed about the room, then darted to the bedside.

"Vivie, Vivie!" he called. "My darling, are you ill? Why didn't they tell me?"

He gathered her into his arms, whispering endearments brokenly. Then the blue eyes opened, the beautiful head rested on his shoulder. "Julian, sweetheart," she murmured.

The curtain fluttered. A cool sweet breeze swept through the room, bringing comfort, healing and forgetfulness on its wings. We tip-toed out leaving them both together.

SIX months later I met Martha in a crowd of Christmas shoppers, the picture of a busy, cheerful, capable housekeeper, intent on the business of the season. She greeted me with enthusiasm.

"It's good to see you again," she exclaimed. "Many and many's the time we speak of you and the good doctor. They're both *fine!*" she went on in answer to my inquiry regarding the Granthams.

"That dreadful time is all over now. The house at Medusa Ridge is sold. None of us ever wanted to see it again. It's queer, though when you come to think of it. Neither of them knows exactly what happened there. Mr. Julian has never asked any questions, and I begged Miss Vivie not to mention those awful experiences to me.

"They are content to let the matter drop into oblivion. Some things don't bear talking about, Miss Ellis! I know they're both afraid to think of that fiend, for fear they'll resurrect her again. They are happy now—the happiest people that I know. May no shadow from another world ever darken their lives again."

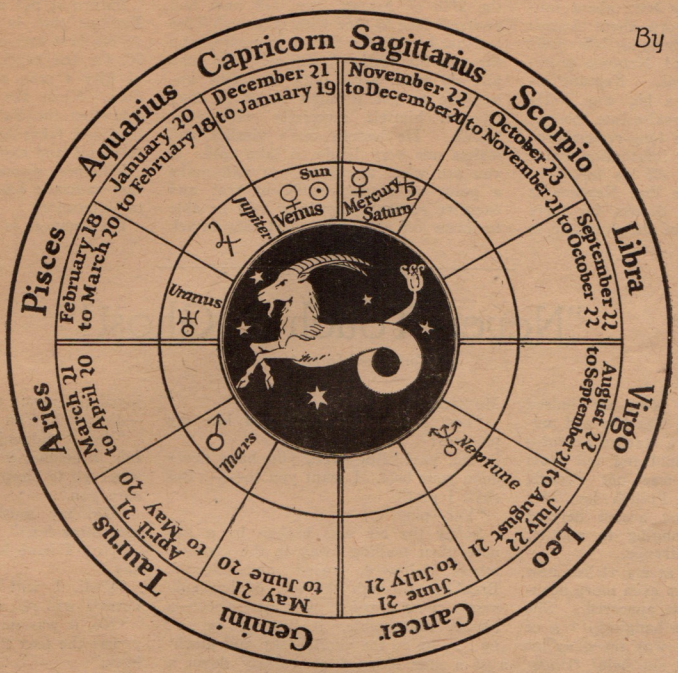
As I left Martha, waving to me cheerily across the busy thoroughfare, in my heart I murmured, "Amen!" and I gave a little prayer that the terrible apparition that haunted Medusa Ridge was laid forever.

One never knows about these things. Doubtless they have much to do with the mind itself. That is, the condition of the mind is apt to have an effect upon the supernatural agencies that are prone to affect it, a healthy mind being the best protection.

Were You Born in January?

Let the Stars Determine Your Fate

By "Stella"



THE CHART TO GUIDE YOU TO YOUR DESTINY

IF you were born in January—or to be more accurate, between December 21st and January 19th—you are the child of Capricorn and of Saturn, the ruler of agriculture, mining, gardening, real estate, and hard work! Among the stars, Saturn is the great worker and disciplinarian and it seems strange that he, of all the planets, should rule Christmas and New Year, most joyous of all our festivals, when we lay aside the burden of work and share with the children the glories of Santa Claus, turkey and plum-pudding!

Yet, in the far-away days of early Rome it was this same Saturn who taught the Romans to till the land, sow the seed and, later, reap the harvest; or, as the Bible puts it, to bring forth the fruits of the earth by the sweat of the brow and the labor of the hand. By teaching them to work, Saturn raised the Romans from a condition of ignorance and barbarism to a state of such order, peace and prosperity that the period during which he ruled is still known as the "Golden Age of Rome."

It was in appreciation of what he had done for them that the Romans held the great festival known as the Saturnalia, which took place each year just about the same time as our Christmas and lasted from five to seven days. It was a time of great rejoicing when slaves and masters dressed alike and were equal, when no punishment was inflicted for crime, and—though it seems too good to be true—when everybody did exactly as he or she liked!

Along the banks of the Tiber on these holidays the days and nights were devoted to pleasure and revelry, gifts were made—especially to the children—and even the wax candles that we associate with Christmas were used and formed an important part of the presents given and received, so that, after all, it is not so strange that this particular time of the year should be under the guidance of Capricorn and its ruler Saturn.

Your star of destiny being the stern but just Saturn, you may expect a fair return for whatever you give, but no favors. Just now, however, while the Sun and Venus are in Capricorn, the ruler of your fate is disposed to be a little more lenient and as the Old Year makes way for the New you may expect both contentment and happiness.

Some Capricornians, despite all Saturn's efforts to the contrary, are incorrigible flirts and if you are inclined this way, opportunity will not be lacking for the beautiful Goddess of Love is now smiling upon you. Or, if you are a born matchmaker, she will see to it that you have a chance to exercise this gift also. In any case, she promises you a happy and successful time.

ATURN in the wheel of fate has also brought you into favor with the beneficent Jupiter, with Mars the energiser, and with Neptune, planet of mystery, drama and psychic experiences. You should therefore be filled with energy, ready and able to take up new work or to continue your round of duties in a spirit of hope and confidence, knowing that the great God of Labor will give you a square deal and a just reward, even as old Saint Nick brings the coveted toy to the child who has been good.

Mars is urging those born between December 25th and January 10th to put

forth their best energies and to make that little extra effort which so often converts possible failure into certain success. For them January should be an eventful month. It may bring them a chance to realize some great wish or ambition or to make favorable connections which will lead to increased prosperity in the future.

To the Capricornians born about January 18th, the Leos born about August 21st, and the Arians whose birthday falls about the 18th of April, Neptune promises an interesting time. Neptune always does things in a big way. He brings the business or real-estate "boom," the fortune in oil, the long-remembered ocean trip, or the great infatuation which sweeps a poor mortal off his feet.

It is not by chance that Neptune is known as the lord of drama, for there is always an element of the dramatic in anything that happens under his direction. Just now, however, Jupiter is opposing Neptune and therefore great caution should be observed in regard to doubtful investments or "get-rich-quick" schemes which may be brought to your attention.

Should your birthday come about the 23rd of February, the 26th of May, or the 27th of August, you will now find yourself face to f ce with responsibilities and hard work, for Saturn is putting you through his testing machine. He may pile up your work until it seems impossible to get through it, or he may concern himself especially with your health. He lessens one's vitality and makes one very liable to take cold. If you are wise, therefore, you will make a point of getting sufficient rest and exercise so that your body will be able to throw off any germs that may attack you while you are under the influence of this vibration.

Saturn does not really mean us any harm but he does delay matters and sometimes brings us heavy disappointment. He is determined to make us do our share of the world's work and is more interested in forming our characters than in giving us a good time.

Saturn is not merciful but he is just. Perhaps that is why the Saturnian is at his best between the ages of 50 and 70, for the psycho-analyst tells us that at fifty a man attains the age of wisdom. When the struggle of youth is forgotten the Saturnian comes into his own and takes his rightful place as the esteemed and experienced leader of men.

Whether woman attains wisdom or just naturally has it, I have been unable to determine.

I assume it is the latter.

"Never Touch a Ghost!"

(*Continued from page 21*)

"Thanks, Monsieur. You are indeed very kind." Her voice was low and musical and tinged with a foreign accent—but to save me I could not tell from what language. It was not French, though she used the French for 'Mr.' It must have been an accent derived from a language belonging to another world. It was very strange.

I had a better look at my visitor now and I saw that she was even more beautiful than she had first appeared. She was dressed in a loose hanging gown of a color with which I was not familiar and in her right hand she held a musical instrument.

"Will you sit down there?" I pointed to my chair over which the moonlight was streaming. As she glided to the chair—for she seemed to glide—I caught my breath. Never before had I seen a creature so beautiful. As the light fell upon her person, her beauty was startling . . . mysterious . . . terrible.

If all the sunbeams were caught and mixed with the phantom light of the moon and stars they would fade when compared to her eyes. If all the sculptors would do their best work, the poets their best poetry, the musicians compose their best music, and the best from each were selected and these selections made into one—it would be a shadow of beauty's expression when compared to the beauty of her face.

STILL, one thing marred it—no, perhaps it made it more beautiful. There was a mark of sadness on her face.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"Me, Monsieur? I came to see you. Aren't you the famous artist who paints so many beautiful pictures?"

"Yes, I paint quite a few. But what do you want here?"

"Nothing. I want to sing and play for you. And then after I have sung and played—perhaps—I will come back. I want my music to touch your soul so that it will be produced on canvas. See, Monsieur?"

"Yes, I see. But don't you like my pictures?"

"Oh, yes! But—well, you have never done your best. I want you to—— But shall I play?"

"Yes—play."

Softly the air was broken by a sad note, then trailing away in the distance others followed, raced and danced. Breaking through the rift of heavenly music came a voice, clear and sweet—a human nightingale. It flew . . . up . . . up . . . up to the vaulted sky and plucking a star skipped as quickly down a shaft of moon-light to drift away into nothing.

The music ceased. There was silence. The moon-light still flooded my chamber. The door was standing ajar. My chair was sitting by the window. The silvery light of the moon alone reclined in its depths.

She was gone!

I cursed as I hastened to the door and looked out. No one was to be seen. I peered through the open window into the night. No one was there.

The moon smiled on. The stars twinkled as if nothing had ever happened. A songster of the night burst into melody somewhere in the distance.

I switched on the light—looked at myself in the mirror. Yes, I was awake. I rubbed my eyes. Had I been asleep? No, I had not. I could still smell the perfume. It was real.

All during the next day I could not work. My paints would fade into the loveliness of the night before. My mind was in a turmoil. Had I been dreaming? I asked myself that question a thousand times.

THAT evening as I sat thinking of her and wondering if she would return, the door was again opened so softly that I did not know she was near 'til she spoke to me.

"Well, Monsieur, I'm back." She smiled sweetly. "I don't believe you enjoyed my music very much last evening—did you? You went to sleep?"

"Yes, I did enjoy it. It was wonderful. I believe it lulled me to sleep. I won't go to sleep to-night, though, I assure you."

"Did my music inspire you to try something big?"

"No. I have been unable to work all day."

"Well, I will leave. If it does you harm I will not sing and play for you."

"No, it was not the music that did it, it was the fear that you would not come back."

She smiled a sad smile.

"If I promise to come every night will you paint?"

"Yes."

"Well, I promise. Shall I play?"

"Yes—please." I started to take her hand and lead her to my chair in the moonlight.

"No, no! Monsieur."

She slipped away from me and glided to the chair unassisted.

"Who are you? Where do you live?" I asked.

"I am what you hear and I live——" She pointed out across the sleeping fields. "Are you satisfied? Shall I play?"

"Yes."

"Will you stay awake?"

"Yes."

"Ah, no, you won't." She smiled a mysterious smile.

Her song that night was different. First she played little smiling melodies. Then she said, "This is who and what I am."

From that chair by the window came music and a voice that words cannot describe. Soft and low it began. It bounded, tripped and laughed. It rushed unmindful, heedless, impetuous to the end of the universe—and then it stopped.

I aroused myself with a start.

She was gone!

Surely I had not been asleep again. But perhaps I had——

The next day I began a new picture. Never had I painted with such ease. It seemed that I had caught all the colors and had them at my command. I was equally surprised and mystified at my skill. As I painted my heart sang and was light. She would come back.

I painted on the picture during the day and then at evening she would come.

For two short weeks she came and each evening she seemed more beautiful. The feeble pen of man is incapable of describing her beauty—only the canvas can do her justice and I was transplanting that beauty swiftly and skilfully.

Each time she came she would sing and play that song, and each time she ceased I would come to my senses only to find her gone. I had ceased to believe I slept. In fact I knew that I didn't. But what became of her? Still I did not worry much. She would return.

THEN came the night of her last visit. That day I had finished my picture. Across the top I had written one word. That word was the name of the picture—it was also the feeling of my soul. I was afraid to show her my picture. I was afraid she would never return.

She had served her mission. But, no! I would not let her go. She must be mine. Had she not inspired me to place my soul in paint upon the canvas? I must have her, I said. I will possess her. She shall never leave me when she comes this evening. I will make her stay.

She came as usual that evening, but it seemed her face was sadder than it had ever been—yet more beautiful. All the emotions that are known to a human swelled up in me. "No!" I cursed beneath my breath, "I will never let you leave. You shall be mine!"

"I have finished my picture."

"Yes," she replied wearily. "Let me see it, won't you Monsieur—please?"

"Yes—after you sing and play for me."

I was taking no chances on her leaving.

"Will you play first?"

"Yes."

She played and sang. It was more beautiful than it had ever been, but a little different. That note of sadness prevailed. And at the end—it trailed away into oblivion instead of dropping suddenly.

"Why the change?"

"Oh, nothing! Just a sudden whim. Please let me see the picture?"

I pushed the easel over in the moonlight. My paints were lying on a little table at the side of the picture. She arose and looked at it. Then she turned to me.

"Ah, Monsieur! It is wonderful. Yes, it is me. And the title—it is the name of my song. Why did you do it?"

An expression of terror and sadness covered her face. She looked like an angel to me. Human restraint had reached its limit. With one step I reached her side and swept her into my arms.

"Why? . . . why? Because you are mine!" I whispered fervently.

I heard a slight noise. The little table had been overturned by my foot and all my paints were running down over my picture. It was ruined. She lay in my arms for a brief enraptured moment, looked up into my face and pointing to the picture said:

"See what you have done? You have ruined it all! Nothing but the title is left."

I looked. The next instant she was gone.

"Ah," I said sadly, "—I should have known. 'Never touch a ghost.'"

I stood with my arms empty and my heart cold. She would never return, and all that remained of my beautiful picture was the title—*Happiness.*

"To the Dead All Things Are Clear"

(*Continued from page* 36)

"I feel that something awful is going to happen!" began to repeat themselves in my brain. I could not shut them away. They gripped me. They made me feel increasingly fearful.

I called myself an idiot, I remembered that I was a hard-headed scientist, yet for the first time in my life, the unknown frightened me. So that, when Kane returned, I really was as relieved as was Emma. He returned in the flesh. I was rather thankful to him for such concreteness. I was not sure how, exactly, I had expected him to return.

"I have found a little cottage," he explained, "about four miles from here. I've rented it. I imagine I can work ideally there. Oh, you mustn't think I fail to appreciate your hospitality, Dufrey. It's because I need a change. I'll make a hermit of myself—except if you people run over once in a while—until the words . . . the words, Dufrey . . . come. You understand?"

WELL, he installed himself in the cottage. I had passed it often in my rambles over the countryside. There he waited for word from beyond. Every three or four days Emma visited him, taking him some delicacy, and to find how he was getting on. I accompanied her, for I thought that in my presence Kane could not impart to her so strongly the excitement of his search.

Kane was, in fact, in a state of perpetual excitement. He was, I said to myself, quite plainly a madman. The floor of his room was littered with papers torn in frenzy, because the true word from beyond had not yet arrived. He wrote and destroyed until his fingers were numb. He looked at us, sometimes, with a stare that lacked recognition.

And once, in a loud, cracked voice, he shouted:

"I shall get it! I tell you I shall convince you and your sceptics!"

"But my dear Kane," I replied quietly, as I tried to soothe him, "—why kill yourself for us sceptics? Are we worth it?"

His eyes went vacant, and he did not answer. What he saw, I cannot tell. It must have been something which we could not see.

Emma too, now, I was sure, feared for his sanity.

"Please come home with us now, Howard," she pleaded. "You need a rest. You'll work better when you get back."

He shook off her hand.

"No, thanks. I'll keep at it. Do me this favor. Come tomorrow afternoon. I believe my book may be complete then."

"So soon?" Emma asked.

"It may be. Will you come? I'll want you to see it, at once. And you too, Dufrey. You may be convinced."

He was in such a deplorable condition, that I promised.

But the next afternoon, when Emma, ready to go, knocked at my laboratory door, I was in the midst of a difficult piece of work that I could not, without losing my cultures, put aside.

"Go alone, dear," I said. "I'll be busy for hours. Tell Kane I'm sorry. Perhaps if he has finished his book, he'll come back with you and read it to me tonight."

SHE was lovely in her dark furs, with her small, pale, oval face and the dark, violet eyes. She kissed me. For a moment or two she held me tight and I felt a shudder run through her.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "What is it, dear?"

"Nothing. I'm all right. Good-bye, Jimmie."

It was not until the door had closed on her, not, perhaps, until I heard her drive away in her car, that it struck me there had been something strange and sad in her good-bye.

"By George!" I muttered to myself, "they've nearly banged up my nerves—those two!"

It all seemed so foolish. With a feeling of irritation I bent over my microscope and soon I had lost all sense of time.

Scarcely aware, at dark I turned on the electric light. The house was silent. The maid had gone to the city for the day. The night looked in at the black windows. The snowy hills were as specters in the distance. I glanced at last at my watch. It was eight o'clock. Emma should have returned long before.

Downstairs, I fidgeted about. I went back to my work, to overcome my feeling of restlessness. I meant, if Emma was not back by nine, to walk to Kane's place and fetch her.

Then I heard the front door open and close. Instantly a weird sense hit into my heart. I had not heard the car come to a stop, though the old rattletrap always made an insufferable noise. However, I realized I had been deep over the test-tubes and retorts, and I told myself I had not been listening.

I became sure of that when I heard Emma's feet on the stairs, and I laughed at myself when Emma came in through my door. Her face was white in the dark furs. Her small hand held a sheaf of manuscript.

"So, *The Irrefutable* is really finished!" I said, smiling.

She sat down and held out the pages to me.

"Will you read it, Jimmie?"

An odd compulsion was in her voice.

"Have you read it?" I asked.

She nodded.

"Well—did the message come across? Will the sceptics bow to this?"

"Read," she said, in the same compelling voice.

For an hour I read, while Emma, motionless, watched my face. There was a quality in her gaze that made me, from time to time, look quickly up at her. I could not define that quality.

"So," I said inwardly, "this is what the hereafter is like. Grass and meadows and flowers, and ineffable peace and complete understanding. And the soul, when it arrives, for a few moments is dazed, and then the new life begins and——"

I looked at Emma.

"But dear, isn't this very like what Kane has written before? Some details differ, but in the main——"

"Perhaps the details make the difference," Emma replied.

"I can't see it. I mean—— You must please permit us—the sceptics—still to doubt. You see——"

"Jimmie," she said, softly, "there can be no doubt of it. It is authentic—that account there, you have."

Her tone arrested me. I looked at her. Again that strange quality in the gaze she returned.

"Hear what happened, Jimmie. When I came to Howard Kane's cottage, Howard was not there. On his desk, under a weight, lay this manuscript. But, as I say, Howard was not there. Then I found a note from him. It read:

> To find my *Irrefutable* I have crossed voluntarily to the other life. You will discover my body at the bottom of the gully, beyond the garden. I returned from the dead to complete my book. Tell the sceptics I must indeed have known what to write. Now, surely, there is the light of verity behind my words. This note, too, was written after my return——

"Here is the note, Jimmie. And here is the manuscript. I went to the gully and down on the rocks I saw him——" She covered her face with her hands.

"Do you believe now, dear? I do so want you to believe! He went out to meet death so he could tell you and others of that which cannot die."

HER words shook me like a gust of cold wind. Then, with sudden anger, I cried:

"What a hoax! What a madman's hoax! Don't you see it, Emma? Don't you see it? His insanity drove him to suicide. Yes! But the shreds of sanity that remained to him were astute enough to make him write this . . . this outrageous lie. He wrote it *before* he died. Don't you see that?"

She shook her head sadly.

"No," she said, "he wrote it *after* he died."

"Emma! Emma, dear——"

"He wrote it *after* he died," she repeated solemnly.

"How do you know? How do you know he did not write it before he——"

"Because, dear—well, as I stared down at him where he lay on the sharp rocks, I was so horrified . . . something happened. You see, dear, *I too am dead.*"

After one unearthly moment, I screamed.

"Emma! Emma!"

Then I took a step toward her. No one was there.

I fell to the floor, and it was long after midnight when I regained consciousness. I stumbled out of that tomb-silent house, into the whistling wind, and I roused a neighbor. The rest can be briefly told.

By the light of lanterns, we found them, both of them, on the rocks at the bottom of the gully.

I WAS very ill, thereafter, for months. In the blackest hours I understood the bond that had existed between those two. I wanted to go to Emma, to tell her that now such a tie bound her to me also?

Yet then, I thought, I have my work here to do. The body suffers here, before the spirit is released to the hereafter.

Emma comes to me often while I work, and I am the better for her presence. I know she is waiting for me, and that she knows my feelings.

"To the dead all things are clear."

The Affair of the Dancing Coffins

(*Continued from page 24*)

the greatest respect for her good sense, and I believed she could help me get to the bottom of the mystery if any one could. I went to see her the same evening.

Helen is a plump brunette, with a sweet, childish mouth. But she has a sane, strong will and the courage of a man.

I took her in my arms and kissed her. Then, while her face was still resting against my shoulder, I plunged into a rapid recital of what I had heard the night before, winding up with a description of the condition of the vault.

She didn't answer for a moment. Then she drew gently away and stared at me in a speculative way.

"I have always half believed in ghosts. Every Southern girl does, I guess," she said. "But don't ask me to credit ghosts with the power of throwing those huge coffins around."

"I'm not asking it. But let's try to use our reason calmly. What was the power?"

"Some kind of an earthquake shock, perhaps. A tremor from deep down that localizes itself at the finish in the rocky foundations of the vault. I've read of such things."

The ingenuity of this set me to wondering.

"It's false science, Helen," I said at last. "An earthquake that could turn even one coffin upside down would wreck the whole cemetery. Besides, think of what I *saw*, as well as of what I heard."

She frowned. "If there's something the folks on the other side want me to know, why doesn't a ghost appear to me? It's not reasonable that you should have seen one, and I shouldn't."

"You haven't been near the vault at night," I answered. "Maybe that's the only place where anybody can see anything. Maybe the dancing of the coffins should be interpreted as a call to come and receive a message."

My will seemed to have nothing to do with my uttering of the above words. They startled me as they left my lips, and I found that I was gazing fixedly at the photograph of an old woman above the mantel-piece.

"The vault—at night?—I?" gasped Helen.

"That's the picture of your Great-aunt Marion, isn't it, dear?" I interrupted.

"Why, yes. What about it?"

"If she knew about your present trouble, she'd want to help, wouldn't she?"

"I'm sure she would. She lived until I was ten years old, and she was very fond of me."

"She's buried in the vault, of course?"

"Yes."

"Please believe that I haven't gone crazy, Helen. But I could swear that the picture of your great-aunt Marion inspired me to say what I said just now about your going to the vault to get a message. And I think it was her face I saw last night."

Helen got up and walked half across the room, covering her eyes with her hand.

"That's different!" she said. "Perhaps she is trying to save me at the last minute."

"The last minute? Is there anything new about the debt to Joshua Brown?"

"Today he turned down my lawyer's plea for a postponement. He says he'll have me arrested on Friday, if I don't pay."

I clenched my fists and started to make some wild oath of vengeance. But Helen calmed me down. "Let's better talk about going to the vault," she urged. "And you mustn't be afraid for me because I'm a girl. I promise you I'll not lose my head, so long as you're with me."

I believed so fully in her nerve that I didn't even argue the point. We made our plans for early that evening. But it was the rainy season, and torrential storms descended suddenly upon us and prevented us from acting either that day or the next.

THURSDAY came before the weather cleared. We could scarcely have endured the suspense much longer. On the following day, Helen was due to be dragged into court as a defaulter—unless the miraculous happened.

About seven o'clock, when the twilight was fading rapidly, we slipped unnoticed by neighbors into the cemetery, made our way to the vault and entered it boldly enough. I had brought along an electric torch and a couple of candles. We lighted the latter, and at once perceived that the coffins were all out of place, with the exception of that of the latest arrival, Edward Durkee. Helen clung to me a little more tightly, but said nothing.

If any one thinks it's easy to sit among the dead, waiting for something to happen, believing it surely will happen—let him try it just once. Once will be enough!

We suffered mental anguish such as I hope will never be repeated for us in this lifetime—waiting for those coffins to dance!

The whistling of the wind outside seemed like ghostly voices. The slightest sound sent a pang of terror through us. The drifting of dry leaves against the metal door were like the faint footfalls of specters.

When at the end of half an hour one of the coffins moved bruskly and definitely it was a relief—fantastic as that may appear to the reader.

I jumped to my feet and walked over to the coffin, leading Helen by the hand.

"It's Great-aunt Marion's," she whispered, after she had glanced at the rusty name-plate.

Three distinct raps, the accepted symbol for "yes" in spirit communication, sounded from the interior. The coffin did not stir and we both knew that the rapping was produced by some agency inside it.

"This is awful!" I muttered. "I wonder what she wants us to do. Open her coffin, perhaps. There may have been some paper buried with her, some secret she wants to reveal to you."

I touched the lid with my finger tips, feeling for the head of a screw. It was an instinctive gesture. Really, I'd not have voluntarily submitted Helen to the ordeal of witnessing the opening of a casket. But an immediate and sensational result was produced.

I felt an icy, invisible hand laid upon my wrist. It tugged at me, while my subconscious mind received a violent impression of hostility, as though I were being forbidden to proceed. Then a wavering, phosphorescent form began to shape itself in the air between Helen's body and mine.

I started backwards. The clasp was removed from my wrist. The phantom drifted away. But it became more definitely human in shape, and for a moment I thought I distinguished the features of Great-aunt Marion Durkee. It halted presently beside one of the oldest of the wooden coffins.

HELEN'S courage remained at a high pitch, at which I have never ceased to marvel. Her fingers clutched my arm, but she walked steadily beside me as we followed the lead of our phantom guide.

The second coffin rested on a shelf about on a level with our shoulders. It will be remembered that none of the wooden caskets had been displaced as violently as the bronze and leaden ones. Though it had moved a little, this one had never been off its shelf. I questioned Helen now, with a glance and the mute pursing of my lips.

"It contains the body of my great-great-grandmother," she answered in tones that were scarcely audible. "She died ninety years ago——"

A horrible creaking and rattling cut her words short. The coffin half turned over and banged itself against the wall. It bounced up and down with an energy for which even the sounds I had heard in the graveyard a few nights previously had not prepared me.

At the same instant, notwithstanding my terror, I observed the phantom grow paler and vanish like the melting of a whiff of smoke.

Then, as Helen and I threw ourselves backwards, the coffin reeled clear of the shelf and fell at our feet. The concussion smashed it. The mouldy boards dropped apart and lay still.

Stretched out in the wreckage, we saw a skeleton with a few rags of ancient finery clinging to it. But there was a glitter of brilliants upon the harmless dry breastbone. They shone with a rich fire in the light from the candles. I stooped down and salvaged nothing less than a diamond necklace of extraordinary beauty. The stones that composed it were worth $50,000 in any market.

I led Helen out of the vault as quickly as I could and locked the doors. Then we went home. I want to state here that the brave girl did not yield to hysteria that evening or at any time in the future.

A search in the records of the family revealed a diary that told the whole forgotten story of the necklace. Helen's great-great-grandfather had buried his wife's favorite jewels with her. Legally there was no doubt that Helen was heir to the gems. Morally, she felt that the dead had given her all the proof she needed that they wanted her to benefit by them.

"The metal coffins danced to attract our attention. But Great-great-grandmother Durkee's was on the point of breaking up, so it waited until I was there. It wasn't intended that any one else should find the necklace and perhaps steal it," she remarked.

At noon the following day, she used the diamonds to settle Joshua Brown's debt in full.

THE coffins have not since moved from their places. But Bridgeville will continue talking about them and shuddering in superstitious terror at mention of them during the lifetime of this generation.

All sorts of wise theories have been advanced to account for the bare facts but it remains a mystery to the public.

The GHOST FORUM

Pro and Con of Spooks in Literature

WERE the Fox sisters, founders of modern spiritualism, genuine mediums—or frauds?

Probably men will wrangle over that question for the next 200 years. One of the managers for the famous pair, when they were touring America in seance exhibitions, assured me they were fakers. He was Elmer P. Ransom, an expert conjurer of New York City. On the other hand the Fox sisters are saints to a great number of devout and intelligent people.

What and whom is the unprejudiced inquirer to believe?

The latest defense of the Fox sisters, as well as of Doctor Monck, D. D. Home, and other celebrated mediums, appears in what is undeniably one of the most important literary efforts ever put forward in the history of psychic research. It is a new two-volume work by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, entitled *The History of Spiritualism.*

The books, just published by Doran, must keenly interest every one at all attracted to the subject—for the romantic and beguiling style of Doyle, the story-teller, is not relinquished by Doyle, the historian.

It is a recital that one cannot expect to be unprejudiced. Everybody knows that Sir Arthur is a devout spiritualist. He cannot therefore write in a detached vein. One might as well look for complete candor from a Democrat writing the history of Tammany Hall.

But he does make successful attempts to be fair to the enemies of spiritualism.

However, one must accept Doyle's "History" with some reservations. But no one will be bored by its engaging narrative. It is a good story, a thrilling tale, that he tells, from the first chapter on Swedenborg down to the closing lines of the second volume. The history of the Shakers is told, and other beginning manifestations; and the early days of the mediums are portrayed with a fervent zeal.

To a man like myself—a conjurer who is, nevertheless, half way ready to accept the spiritistic theory as a possible truth—it is nevertheless staggering to observe, in this portion of the book, the firm confidence of this good and in some ways great man, who actually created the astute character of Sherlock Holmes. Here we find him giving a clean bill of health to the notorious Davenport brothers. I cannot take these pages of the "History" seriously. I have discussed the Davenport brothers with a man to whom they taught their tricks—the late Harry Kellar, greatest of all the modern magicians. More, I discussed them with a woman who knows whereof she speaks—Anna Eva Fay.

I know to my own satisfaction at least that the Davenport brothers faked part of the time. And this is to say nothing of the valuable testimony presented by Houdini in his book, *A Magician Among the Mediums.*

On the other hand, Doyle wins more than one victory over the enemies of spiritualism. He refutes a very persistent story that Professor Zoellner, a scientist converted to occultism, died in a mad-house. He does a good service, also, to the memory of Home.

Now and then he lets his disapproval of psychic research societies flare out. Doyle regards with contempt the agnostic mood and method in a scientific study of psychic phenomena.

The second volume of the history is, by far, the more interesting of the two. It discloses the new story of psychism, and should leave a reader, new to the subject, mentally a-gasp, wondering if all he has just been told can possibly be true—even if a fragment of it can be true.

Here we learn of spirit photography, of ectoplasm, and the revival of interest that followed after the war.

In preparing *The History of Spiritualism,* Doyle was greatly helped by W. Leslie Curnow.

NOT content with this two-volume history of his faith, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has tossed still a third volume on the literary sea this fall. It is a novel—and it is called *The Land of Mist.*

I remember reading certain of its chapters in an English magazine while in London last year. The quality of these further adventures of Professor Challoner—the hero of Doyle's *Lost World* and *Poison Belt* stories—has not improved between the covers of a book.

As a story-teller Doyle has, in my opinion, no living equal. He is a modern tale-spinner, fit to be ranked with the romancers who sit on rugs in Oriental bazaars, guardians of the Arabian Nights.

One virtue of *The Land of Mist* is that it does give a dramatic and authentic picture of what seances and mediums are really like. Now and then in the pages of the book Sir Arthur forgets that he is a spiritualist—forgets it in spite of his fervor, and reverts to his proper role of story-teller. Then the story glows and lives. There are certain moments in *The Land of Mist* that are packed with real curdling thrills.

THE Door of Death Wide Open is the title of still another volume to be added to the rapidly growing pyramid of new books on psychic subjects. The author is Jules Guyard, who is credited also with being the author of *The Dead* and *The Moon and Her Etherics.*

Mr. Guyard attempts, not always in good English or good taste, to tell just what happens after we die. His book tells with the most naive assurance, the "rules, regulations, customs, and daily life" of the spirits. The "Mooners" and the "Islanders" are carefully described. You will probably form your own opinion of the book when I advise you that Chapter Three is entitled "You Vomit Your Life."

It is published by The Christopher Publishing House, of Boston.

IT is a relief to turn from such flapdoodle as this last really is to a truly sane, sensible, competent and arresting treatment of these important topics. I now refer to a new book entitled *Psychical Research, Science and Religion* by Stanley De Brath.

Here is a new book that challenges attention. The materialist will be left bewildered, perhaps a little incensed, but undeniably he will recognize in this author a man who will be heard and must be reckoned with.

The study to which Mr. De Brath addresses himself is the effect of scientific psychical research upon the religions of today.

That is his intention. But what he has really done amounts to a great deal more than that. What he has really done is to present a concentrated statement of what modern scientists believe to be the known facts in their peculiar field. From this viewpoint the book assumes a considerable importance.

I have no hesitancy in recommending it unreservedly to any inquirer who wants information in a form concise, definite, and interesting, as to what scientists believe they have established in psychical research.

This is also published by Doran.

ANOTHER little book came to my attention recently which deeply interested me—*Magic in the Making* by Mulholland and Smith, two young conjurers who are members of the Society of American Magicians.

By perusing the very simple text and studying the illustrations, one can become an accomplished magacian in an hour.

The book is published by Scribners.

—J. A. V.

The Thing in the Tree

(*Continued from page 38*)

cask smaller and stronger than the others in the room. It bore heavy bands of copper around its squat rotundity. Its chines were twice as thick as a man's palm and its staves were hewed by hand. A hoary and ancient thing it was—as like a hunch-backed and wicked old man as any inanimate thing I had ever seen.

CRANDALL stooped with a cup to the spigot and drew a measure. In the lantern's glow it was like amber fire, all scintillating and alive with little lights of onyx and lapis-lazuli. It glinted like the unlidded eye of a serpent and for some unexplainable reason it fascinated us. It ran out of the spigot noiselessly and smoothly—as a serpent might glide to strike. We stood spell-bound as we watched it—a liquid that actually seemed to live—possessing a mysterious something about it that sent a cold chill through me.

Craig, the lawyer and the scoffer, took the cup when it was offered him by Crandall and in an effort to be jocular (though I knew he did not feel that way) he proposed a toast.

"Now—here's to Death, the greatest joker of them all!" he said, as he held the cup aloft. Then gulping, as though he were seizing upon a poison potion, he tossed it down his throat.

There was a tense moment. Then Craig laughed.

"You ribald ass," he said to Crandall. "Why, you old skinflint! Brought us down this dark passage, half scared us to death, just to give us a taste of a liquid as delectable as ever tempted the lips of man!"

Suddenly in the meager light the laugh on his face froze to a grin—the grin that comes from a death's head.

We stood, frozen with horror. His body appeared to lengthen into angularity, his neck became scrawny, his fingers like talons. His nose was pinched and the skin drew taut as parchment and the color of an old drumhead. His eyes blazed in the semi-darkness like coals of horrid, greenish fire. Suddenly no hair was on his head. He was more bald than on the unfortunate day his mother bore him into this world.

"You curs!" he howled. "You fiends of hell! What have you done to me?"

His speech ended in a horrible gurgle in his throat. His talons went to his turkey-cock neck. His eyes bulged from their sockets, like a skull attempting to come to life. Blood-curdling, moaning sounds issued from his tightened lips.

He turned upon us like a beast and struck out. We fell back before him, scattered like a pack of dogs when a hideous beast is at bay. His searching eyes espied a small axe near a cask and this he seized and whirled above his head.

"Seize him! Stop him!" roared Crandall, but before the words had penetrated our numbed brains, Craig had, with ferocious strength, thrown the axe from him and had dashed up the stairs.

"Quick!" yelled Crandall. "Don't let him get away. He'll kill himself! Come on, let's go after him!"

IT seemed ages before we moved, our leaden feet heavy and ungovernable. When at last we did start headlong for the stairs, we fell in a heap in our eagerness to get out.

Then up the stairs and to the room that a few moments before had been so quiet and so comfortable, we ran. Now the sparks from the log fire were dancing helter-skelter in a gale that blew in at the open door.

"After him! Quick!" commanded Crandall breathlessly.

Following Crandall's lead we leapt through the open doorway. The night was black. The sky was starless and passing from the light, meager as it had been, we could see nothing in the darkness. Batchelder tripped over something, fell heavily and cursed. Stewart ran headlong into a tree and succumbed. I stepped off the porch and narrowly missed breaking a leg. But somewhere in the darkness we could hear Crandall running and screaming, crashing through weeds and scrub which, in the passing of years, had overgrown the door-yard.

We gathered ourselves up and keeping close together we followed along the path Crandall had taken. Shortly we heard him call at some distance from the house. I, the least winded of any, answered as loudly as I could, but it was a feeble shout and I doubt if Crandall heard.

As we staggered on in the darkness we soon heard Crandall returning ahead of us.

"Back to the house," he shouted, "and bring a light. Craig is gone. He's out there at the rocks. He's out at the Gaillard tree! God!"

Not understanding, we obeyed Crandall's command and turned back to the house where we could see the doorway outlined against the fire's dancing flames. Crandall overtook us, pushed by us and hurried into the room. Before we were at the door he was back again, this time with an electric torch whose glaring white rays were a relief to our sorely tried senses. Again we followed him stumbling, panting and driven onward by intuition of impending disaster.

Through the weeds of the door-yard, over a rotting, wooden fence, across a nearby meadow we plunged on. Up a steep knoll we toiled and then into an ancient orchard where, in the light of the torch, old limbs, gnarled and weather-beaten as a hermit's frame, threatened us. We came into a bit of clearing that was apart from the rest of the orchard where seemingly a tottering monarch had riven a space about him beyond the charmed circle of which his subjects might not trespass.

"Look," said Crandall, flashing the torch upward; "Gaillard's got him. Gaillard's done for him. Gaillard's russet is his doom."

As we gazed in awed silence, we beheld in the branches of that ancient

apple tree a specter that sent a chill through us. His distorted face grinned leeringly at us—the eyes open, and bulging. It was Craig's face!

His clothes flapped ghoulishly in the wind. His legs dangled tenuously and seemed to twist about each other. His taloned hands hung idly as a scarecrow's. But it was the manner in which he was suspended that set up the ache in our bones and made the sweat stand in great beads on our foreheads.

For his turkey-cock neck was caught in the crotch of one of the limbs a full twelve feet from the ground, and almost before our eyes the branch was closing in and around it as though that gruesome head would be sheared from the cadaverous body.

"Get back!" screamed Crandall suddenly. "Get back out of the clearing. Back!"

Already stunned by the awful thing we saw before us, we were slow to heed Crandall's warning and before any of us came to our senses, I felt a slimy thing grasp at my ankles.

I LOOKED down quickly and all about me it seemed as if the roots of that old tree were alive, coming to the surface like the tentacles of an octopus to twine about our bodies, to crush us, to raise us to the position in which that *thing* that once had been Craig was lifted.

I kicked and scuffed those terrible twining, crawling roots. I sprang upward only to come trampling down upon them. They seemed everywhere, squirming, running, working. I screamed aloud in my intensity to rid myself of them.

Then, jumping, leaping, fighting, I somehow made the edge of the clearing into the beneficent haven of those other trees. One by one the others came, stumbling, tottering, falling beside me as I lay on the ground.

How long it was we lay there I do not know. Perhaps all of us fell into a comatose sleep, for when I at last roused myself the dawn was breaking afar in the east and I was half dead from cold. Near me was Batchelder, lifeless for all I could tell, until I noticed a slight rise and fall of his chest.

Stewart was face downward, motionless, his face caked with dried blood from a cut on his scalp. Crandall lay wide-eyed—staring at nothing.

With every muscle and every joint in my body aching I slowly dragged myself over and shook them all. One by one, after repeated shakings, they also wakened. To all it must have seemed a hideous nightmare through which they had passed.

None spoke for a time, each gazing at the other in mute questioning. I knew the thoughts that went through their minds—the attempt to recall where they were, what had happened, how they came to be in the condition in which they found themselves. At last Crandall spoke.

"Fiends of hell were in that cider. God, I never should have told him!"

He looked about him blankly. "But I wanted to see if the tale was true," he moaned, covering his face with his hands. "God! . . . God help me!"

"Then — then it is not a dream?" Batchelder queried piteously.

"Look for yourself," replied Crandall.

There in the gray light we again saw the gnarled and twisted apple tree. The tenuous roots were gone but still in the branches hung the *thing* that had once been poor Craig. If anything, that turkey-cock neck had grown longer by the weight of the body.

An oath escaped Stewart's parched lips. "Let's get out of here!" he muttered thickly.

It was the fervent wish of us all and acting in accord we struggled to our feet and, haltingly, limpingly, staggered back to the house.

The day was gray and the wind cold and eerie. Crandall poked the embers of the fire and stirred it into a desultory flame. He suggested a bit to eat, but none had a stomach for that. From somewhere he brought out a liquid that stung and burned and warmed us as it sent the blood into circulation again.

"We've got to get Craig away," said Crandall at length. "Who'll help me?"

Stewart and Batchelder were without the strength. It remained for me to go with Crandall. Securing an axe from a woodshed we started out. We walked in silence for a few moments but the headiness of the burning liquor Crandall had provided stimulated a question within me.

"What's the meaning of it all, Crandall?" I asked after a while. "What was the stuff you gave Craig to drink?"

"A hell's potion," he replied without turning his head, his gaze fixed steadily ahead toward the tree which we were nearing. Then he stopped suddenly. "I'm not so sure but that it will get me too," he muttered.

"But you took none," I argued. "Why do you say that?"

"Listen," he replied, "if Craig were alive with his legal reasoning he would tell you I am a murderer, though an unwitting one, and that if there is justice in this world I should receive the penalty. There is a story behind it all and this I must tell you, for I have a feeling that doom awaits me this day."

HE paused to wipe away the beads of perspiration that dampened his brow. His hands shook as though the cold wind had bitten him to the marrow.

"This farm," he began as we walked on more slowly, "belonged to an uncle of mine and he was reputed to be the meanest, stingiest man in the state. Weird tales are told of him—how he robbed the poor, how he persecuted the widows who owed him money. So penurious was he that in his grasp for gold he is said to have opened graves by night that he might steal the keepsakes sacred to the dead. So he lived, grasping, wicked, a fiend of the devil.

"Then the story moves on. It was said that in his money-lending deals he secured the upper hand of a countryman who lived near here. Poor crops, illness, a dozen other circumstances that flock to misfortune like buzzards to a feast caused this man extreme financial embarrassment. My uncle threatened to put him in jail as a defrauder unless he paid his loans. This the man was unable to do.

"But he had a daughter whose rare beauty caught my uncle's eye and to the daughter my uncle appealed. He whispered in her ear that under certain conditions she might appease the debt. At first the daughter would not listen. But she loved her father and my nefarious uncle pointed out to her that she would be a heroine. Driven to distraction for love of her father, the girl must have become insane.

"Anyway, at last she yielded—but did my uncle keep his promise to release her father from debt? He did not. Soon he had clapped the man into jail on a trumped-up charge that would not hold water in any court upon trial. But that did the daughter no good, for with her father away she submitted to her despair and eventually her body was found at the bottom of the chasm.

"Whether the weight of years upon my uncle had driven him like the beast he was to seek solitude when it came time for him to die or whether he was stricken with remorse and was a suicide is a matter of conjecture. One day he disappeared. No one knew whatever became of him. I was his sole heir and since I had seen enough of the world through travel I came to this farm as soon as the estate was settled. Here I have lived the same solitary life that my uncle lived, but, heaven knows I never wronged woman or man until the night that has just passed."

CRANDALL paused, again wiped the perspiration from his forehead and after a moment attacked the trunk with the axe. It was difficult work, for apple wood is hard and tough with a grain that twists and turns in amazingly fantastic ways. But this tree seemed tougher and harder and more twisted than any of its fellows. The corpse in its branches fluttered and swayed—a gruesome thing—as Crandall's blows fell upon the trunk.

"Why do you cut the trunk of the tree?" I asked. "Why not cut the limb?"

"It must be felled," he answered enigmatically.

For a space he continued at work. He was a strong man and a skilled axeman but he had labored the better part of an hour before the trunk was more than two-thirds cut. Pausing to rest he continued the narrative he had so abruptly concluded.

"One day while rummaging through my uncle's books," Crandall said, "I came across his diary. It was filled with the maunderings of what presumably was a diseased, or, at least, a fanatical mind. Some of it was terrible enough, but it was the last entry that broke off without a definite termination, that has burned into my brain. I have read it so often I can repeat it by rote. It said:

"'The devil is in the russet apple tree in the north orchard. I have seen him today. He leered at me and beckoned to me. Sometime I will go to him, for the girl has cursed me. She cursed me the night before they found her body, as she came to this house. She said I had wronged her. Well, what if I have? What difference is that to me? But she

said I was as crooked as the Gaillard russet tree and as hard and twisted. I laughed at her. She cursed me and said I was a devil and that I should be a devil in a tree and that whosoever drank of the fruit of that tree should be as mad as I."

Crandall shivered. The wind was rising again and although the morning was well advanced the sky was overcast and deep gloom seemed to settle over everything. The half-severed tree swayed in the wind.

"I've pondered much on that entry and from other evidences I found about the house," Crandall continued, "I became convinced that my uncle meant this particular tree for it seems it is of a kind that was popular a generation ago, called Gaillard's russet. Despite its remaining unpruned it has borne wonderful russet apples and from a crop of these three years ago I had that cider made of which poor Craig drank last night.

"I had wanted someone to taste it to prove my theory concerning the warning of my uncle. I never had the nerve to taste it myself. Somehow I felt the disappearance of my grasping uncle and that tree were linked. I don't know what possessed me last night. I must have been mad myself, when I enticed Craig into taking that liquor.

"You know the rest. I feel that I murdered Craig with that insane desire to test a theory."

Crandall paused again. His back was to the tree as he faced me. Suddenly there was a veritable hurricane of wind. The tree beneath its impulse swayed perilously, cracked and before I could warn Crandall it fell, crushing him to earth. One gigantic limb that seemed like a wildly waving arm pointed for a second to the sky and as I stood rooted to the spot it turned and struck me too.

AGAIN I lay unconscious. Again I roused myself to consciousness and looked about me. Crandall lay terribly crushed beneath the tangle of branches. Across him with staring, gleeful eyes was the *thing* that once was Craig.

In the hollow of the tree's splintered stump was the skeleton of a bent and twisted old man. Terrified, I dragged my aching body away from the accursed spot.

Under the Spell of the Red Circle

(*Continued from page* 48)

clad figure at the head of the stairs. It was Evelyn.

"For the love of Mike!" exclaimed Timothy.

Evelyn descended the stairs, and walked across the living-room, straight toward them. Her eyes were fixed upon Travers', a smile upon her lips.

"Anthony!" she exclaimed, holding out her arms to him.

The astonished detectives watched Evelyn advance to embrace Travers.

"Marie," said Travers, "you look frightened."

"Oh, I am so bewildered," answered Evelyn, with a profound sigh, staring at the detectives, and back at Travers. "You are dressed—so oddly."

Travers flashed the two brothers a triumphant glance.

"It is a masquerade, dear," he replied.

"The jewels, Anthony," she said, ignoring this; "I had them, and then——"

"And then?" he urged.

"I was afraid to leave the house. They were watching."

"Who were watching?"

"Why, Father, and those terrible men."

Timothy O'Hara stirred restlessly.

"Say, what the devil does all this mean?" he cried.

Travers wheeled upon him angrily.

"Shut up, you fool——"

Evelyn started, gave a gasp, and Travers caught her in his arms.

"Marie!" he cried; "it's all right. The jewels; what became of them——"

SHE was trembling violently. It was as if there was a struggle taking place between the two personalities.

"Marie!" said Travers sternly; "I command you to answer me. What became of the jewels?"

She looked up at him, and flung her arms about him, kissing him upon the lips.

"The jewels," she murmured dreamily. "I took them—to the passage under the house——"

"Go on," cried Travers.

"I—I hid them, and was returning when I heard a shot somewhere above, in the house. I went up cautiously, and saw Father on the floor. Oh—those men had quarreled with him—had killed him. Tom Brevoort had a pistol. Oh——"

"Yes, dear; tell me," urged Travers.

"I—I suppose Daddy knew I was in danger, and even though he had conspired to get the jewels, he was afraid that—they would hurt me. That beast, Brevoort, saw me, and pointed the pistol at me, and I ran back into the passage. Oh, Anthony, why did you leave me to go to Mt. Vernon?"

"I—I had to, dear," said Travers, quickly. "Did—did Brevoort follow you?"

"They both did—he and Will Griggs. Tom overtook me, and started to choke me, demanding to know where the jewels were. I lied—told him that you had taken them to President Jefferson——"

Timothy could not suppress an exclamation. Travers glared at him, and Evelyn stared at both of the detectives, as if seeing them for the first time.

"Who—who are these strange men, Anthony?" she asked.

"Friends," said Travers quickly. "Tell me, Marie—what did Brevoort say when you told him that I had taken the jewels?"

"He said that—that if it was true, he would kill me. Oh, I didn't know what to do. If I told him where they really were, he would probably kill me, too, and get the jewels besides. And then you would be beheaded, Anthony. Why do you talk to me in English? You never do."

"It is better," said Travers, "—to avoid suspicion. Come—what happened then?"

"I tore myself away from him, just as Will Griggs appeared, and ran down the passage to the chamber, turning into the witches' den. I had hidden the jewels under a stone, and thought I would get them and take the passage to the river. But before I could lift the stone, I heard them behind me. It was too late to spring the lever that closed the den. Tom hit me with the butt of the pistol, and—that is all I can remember."

Travers put his arm around her.

"Are you sure? Is that all, dear?"

She nodded.

"Things simply went dark—and my head hurts so. Look; is there a wound, Anthony?"

He stroked her hair.

"No; not the slightest."

"Oh, Anthony—I feel so weak! Where is Father? And has Mr. Brainard returned with you?"

"Father," said Travers slowly, "is dead, and——"

"Oh," she gasped, swaying; "my head—my head——"

Travers caught her, and carried her to a couch in the living-room.

"Go, Marie!" he commanded softly. "Evelyn! Evelyn——"

Her eyes fluttered and opened, and she stared at him in astonishment, and at the two detectives.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, sitting up. "Professor—have I had another attack?"

"Yes, Miss Grover," said Travers kindly.

"By George!" exclaimed Timothy, "—you kissed the professor and called him 'Anthony'——"

Travers turned and grabbed the detective by the throat.

"Take that back!" he cried.

Timothy struggled with him, and Mike seized the professor in his powerful arms. Evelyn stared at them in amazement. Mrs. Grover appeared suddenly on the stairs, and hurried down.

"Evelyn—I wondered where you were. What is happening?"

TRAVERS was forced into a chair, and Timothy stood over him, shaking his fist.

"Don't try to make fools out of Mike and me. I don't know what your game is, Prof. but all this ghost business is too much for me. You hypnotized Miss Grover—that much is certain. She may as well know it, though how in hell you got her to come down stairs is more than I can figure out."

"Wait!" cried Evelyn, pale, staring at Travers. "Is it true, Professor? Did I—kiss you, and——"

Travers nodded coolly.

"These fools," he said, indicating the detectives, "are skeptical about your—obsession. I called upon Marie Jacques, and you came down—as Marie.

"Oh!"

"You see, Miss Grover," went on Travers, "you may as well know the truth, as O'Hara says. When under the spell of one of these trances, we will call it, you really imagine yourself to be this Marie Jacques, who lived over a hundred years ago. I am not going to attempt to tell you what I personally think about it all. I do say this, however. There are secret passages in this house, and under it. If we can gain entrance to them, and"—flashing a glance at the O'Hara brothers—"find the spot where this Marie met her death, it will result in a cure for you, and clear up a great mystery."

Evelyn stared at him.

"I—I think I am Marie Jacques?" she queried slowly. "Yes, Bob told me the same thing. But—but they say that—I kissed you, and called you 'Anthony'?"

Travers nodded.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Grover; "you shouldn't have told her, Professor. She will worry, now——"

"I didn't!" said Travers. "That idiot O'Hara blurted it out. Naturally, Evelyn wanted to know. I think she should know, anyway."

"Of course I should," exclaimed Evelyn, rising. The color was returning to her cheeks. "I've been kept in the dark too long as it is. If the professor believes that he can—clear up the situation, it is my duty to place my trust in him. We've simply got to find Father. If—if he's in one of those secret passages, we should——"

SUDDENLY there was a crash, and a hoarse cry coming from above.

"Father!" cried Evelyn, running toward the stairs.

She darted up them, Travers and the detectives following after her. She disappeared at the top, and they heard a door slam. As they reached the hall, they found it empty.

"Probably in her room," said Travers, running to her door and flinging it open. But the room was vacant.

They searched the rest of the rooms, but Evelyn had completely vanished.

"That's funny," grunted Timothy. "Where could she have gone? And that noise—that cry."

"Sh! listen!" cried Travers.

As from a great distance they heard a high-pitched scream, that ceased abruptly.

"She's in that passage!" cried Travers. "There is such a thing—we've got to find it!"

He darted into her room, feeling the wall, the detectives following him. They sounded the walls, but they were of plain plaster, and the possibility of a secret door was obviously improbable.

"This is uncanny!" cried Travers.

"Well, let's look in the other rooms," grunted Timothy.

They entered Travers' room, Mrs. Grover and Sam appearing from below, anxiously inquiring about Evelyn.

"She disappeared," cried Travers. "We're going to find her if we have to tear this house down, brick by brick!"

But a thorough examination of the upstairs revealed nothing. They stood in the hallway, helplessly discussing the situation, when the voice of Mammy Jane reached them, calling excitedly from below:

"Missus Grovah—Missus Grovah!"

"Yes, Mammy?" Mrs. Grover answered.

"Oh—come heah, quick—in d' livin' room!"

There was terror in her voice.

They hurried to the head of the stairs, and paused in horror at the sight that met their eyes. Mammy was pointing to the fire-place.

Stretched across the hearth was the body of a man.

"CHARLES—Charles!" screamed Mrs. Grover, running down the stairs, and rushing to the hearth. "Oh, my God! it's my husband—dead!"

The body was stretched face downward in front of the fire-place. Timothy turned it gently over, revealing the bearded countenance of Doctor Grover. He was dead, his face set in an expression of the utmost agony.

On his forehead was a circular scratch, three inches in diameter, from which the blood flowed slowly.

"The *Red Circle!*" gasped Travers.

Mrs. Grover lurched forward, and Timothy caught her.

"Mammy!" cried Travers. "Take care of Mrs. Grover. Let's carry her to the couch over there."

"T—take her upstairs," stuttered Mammy Jane.

"No," said Travers, helping the detectives carry the limp form of Mrs. Grover to the couch. "There's something mysterious about the upper floor. Everybody had better stay together, down here."

They revived the poor woman, who burst into a paroxysm of grief. Mammy stayed by her side, ordering Sam about. The trembling negro brought smelling salts, and a sheet was spread over the body of the unfortunate doctor.

Timothy O'Hara, pale and grim-visaged, called up the police on the telephone and reported the death of Doctor Grover, and the strange disappearance of his daughter.

"God, this is awful!" he exclaimed, hanging up. "They're sending a detail from Headquarters at Richmond. How in God's name did that body get into this room?"

Travers bit his lip in emotion.

"Through the secret passage, wherever it is," he said, clenching his powerful hands.

"Hello—what's this?" exclaimed Mike O'Hara, picking up a small bit of paper from the hearth. "Why—it's a note!"

"Where did you find it?" exclaimed his brother, running over.

"In between the bricks of the hearth. There's a pin in it. It must have fallen off the body."

He read it, his face becoming grave. Silently, he handed it to Timothy. Travers looked over his shoulder at the slip of paper, upon which was drawn a large, red circle. Within the circle was roughly printed, in red letters:

"What happened to the doctor will happen to all of you, if you remain in this house after midnight. This is the last warning."

"Damn the *Red Circle!*" cried Timothy, reddening.

He took out his revolver, examined it carefully, and replaced it.

"We've got to do something," cried Travers. "There must be more than one entrance to that passage, wherever it is. There is one upstairs, somewhere. Both Mr. Grover and Evelyn disappeared from there. And there must be one here, in this living-room."

"There's a passage, all right," said Timothy, grimly. "And it's probably a rendezvous for that gang of cut-throats."

But a careful examination failed to reveal the slightest clew as to an opening. For one thing, the outside walls were three feet thick, and sounding them was a slow process, made particularly difficult by the mass of vines that covered the building.

FOR a while, Timothy O'Hara listened on the inside while his brother, armed with mallet and cold chisel, tapped the exterior. There was some difficulty in determining each other's relative position, however, and each continued a somewhat bungling and unsatisfactory examination without arriving at any conclusion.

Supper was served in silence. Mrs. Grover and Travers ate very little—and that without relish. The heavy, ominous atmosphere of the house was felt by all, and the consciousness that, somewhere near them, hidden in the walls or under their very feet, was Evelyn, a prisoner of the *Red Circle*, made conversation distasteful. Then there was the body of Doctor Grover in the next room.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Grover, rising suddenly; "I—I *can't* eat while—while——"

"My dear Mrs. Grover," said the professor, rising; "you haven't had a thing to eat all day."

She shrugged, and left the room, avoiding glancing toward the grim object on the hearth, covered with its white sheet. Mammy Jane, watching from the kitchen, saw her mistress rise from the table, and followed her into the music room.

"I guess I'll go and work on that code," announced Travers, leaving the table. "When will the police get here?"

"Any minute now," replied Timothy. "It's quite a long drive from Richmond."

Travers went into the library, and took out the book.

"Somewhere in this ancient diary," he muttered grimly, "must be a reference to the secret passages. If the book fails, we'll tear down the old pile—dynamite it—anything!"

He had hardly seated himself when a machine drove up to the house. It was still light enough outside for Travers to see that they were police officers. Sam admitted them, and the O'Hara brothers introduced the lieutenant—a heavy, iron-jawed individual, who proceeded to take charge of the house, meanwhile asking innumerable questions.

"It's the toughest lay I've seen for some time," remarked Timothy. "Professor Travers thinks there may be a secret passage, Chief, and it looks that

way to us, though we can't be sure."

The lieutenant flashed Travers a sharp glance.

So you're this Professor Edwin Travers, eh? Go in for spooks and all that rubbish. I've read about you."

Travers smiled cynically. The lieutenant was of the same phlegmatic type as the O'Hara brothers. The three made a typical official trio, grim-visaged, deep-chested minions of law and order. Behind them stood five stalwart policemen.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" the lieutenant asked.

Travers explained his presence briefly.

"Hmph! Doctor Grover challenged you, eh? You think that his daughter keeps company with a spirit."

He grunted contemptuously, and savagely bit the end off a cigar. Travers shrugged.

"What difference does it make what I think? You know the facts, Lieutenant Connor—the doctor is dead, Evelyn is missing. You've heard all of the details, seen the mysterious messages. The main thing," he said emphatically, "is to locate this passage, as soon as possible."

"Yeah. Well, what is this code thing you're working on? An ancient diary, you say?"

"Yes, written by Andrew Brainard over a hundred years ago. It is a historical fact that this old mansion was a rendezvous for, first American patriots, and later, French communists. Somewhere in this diary there must be a clew to the secret passage."

The lieutenant examined the book and the decoded notations with some interest for a while.

"It may be," he said at length. "You keep at it, Professor, and we'll go over the walls thoroughly in the mean time."

FOR the better part of an hour the officers went over the ancient house, making measurements and careful soundings, while Travers pored over the diary, laboriously deciphering its pages. The briefest mention was made of Anthony Jacques and his mysterious mission of disposing of the royal jewels. President Jefferson was mentioned again:

> "——the President's assistance was pledged in quietly arranging protection for Jacques and myself in disposing of the quantity of gems, necklaces and brooches. He is at heart in sympathy with the communist cause, though matters of state make it necessary that he preserve an outwardly neutral attitude."

Quite interesting, but Travers was in no mood to revel in obscure political intrigues. With Evelyn in the clutch of the *Red Circle*, he sought frantically for a clew as to the arrangement of hidden passages.

As he worked on the coded notations, he was aware that he loved her—had loved her from the moment that he had seen her portrait in his office at Washington. He flushed as he recalled the pressure of her firm, young lips.

"God, I must save her!" he cried. "Those devils have her in their clutches, and——"

He paled suddenly. What if Ronald Tracy *still lived!*

The thought chilled him to the marrow. Yet, there was a possibility that this arch-fiend was hidden at that moment, somewhere within the walls of the house, or under his very feet.

HE came to the last page of the diary, decoding the lines abstractedly, his mind apathetically considering his disturbing thought. Then suddenly he stared at the page before him, uttering an exclamation. Lieutenant Connor thrust his head in the door.

"What's the matter, Professor?"

"Connor! I've found it, at last—the passage!"

The lieutenant hurried into the room, followed by Mike O'Hara, and they peered over his shoulder at the message:

> "That old scoundrel, Captain Jacques, is intent upon obtaining the jewels, and has tracked his nephew, Anthony, to the house. Marie and the young man are safe in the passage. Jacques threatens my life unless I disclose their hiding place. He little realizes that his men are at this moment loitering around the outside entrance at the old well. We are completely at their mercy but I defy them—Jacques and Brevoort together! Let them kill me if they will. They shall never know. They would like to know the entrance to the passage. Ha! I laughed at them! Could these fools know enough to remove the glazed brick in the center of the hearth, pull the lever——"

Travers rose.

"Come on, gentlemen! there's no time to lose!"

He dashed into the living-room, and knelt before the fireplace. Connor and Mike followed him excitedly, while Timothy O'Hara and two officers descended the stairs hastily.

Travers pointed to a glazed brick that formed the central point in the hearth.

"That's it!" exclaimed Connor excitedly. "The thing is flush with the others, though, and filled in around the edges with mortar."

"Well," Travers said shortly. "The passage has been opened from the inside. Get a chisel, and we'll loosen the mortar."

IN a few minutes the brick was pried loose, and with a chisel on one side and a screw-driver on the other, they raised it from its place. Directly below was a heavy iron ring.

"A darned clumsy arrangement, I'm thinking," Connor grunted. "This Brainard guy would have had a tough time disappearing in a hurry."

He reached a hand into the opening, and clutched the ring, giving a mighty tug. There was a creaking sound, and the bottom of the fireplace dropped suddenly as if on hinges, folding against the wall, revealing a black opening. They listened silently, drawing their revolvers. Not a sound could be heard. An ancient, musty smell of earth assailed their nostrils.

"Come on," Travers said, stepping into the hole.

"Better go easy, Professor," warned Connor. He turned to the others. "Timothy, you'd better stay up here with

two men in case anything happens. Mike and the professor and I will go below, and," he motioned to three of the officers, "you fellows stand guard at the well outside."

Travers had disappeared from sight, and Connor drew his flash-light and he and Mike scrambled into the aperture.

"Travers?" Connor called, as he dropped to the soft earth five feet below, swinging the beam of his light along a narrow passage.

"Shut up!" came an impatient whisper from somewhere beyond. "Be careful of that light."

Connor and O'Hara crept crouchingly forward, the guarded beam of the light disclosing Travers in a narrow passage that communicated with the main one.

"Look," Travers said; "there are stairs here."

They saw that a flight of stairs, two feet wide, ascended into darkness above.

"All right—let's see where they go to," Connor said, and guided by the light, they ascended to a level passageway, high enough to enable them to walk single file in an erect position.

"Lord, what a smell!" exclaimed O'Hara. A rat suddenly darted out of a hole and scampered down the stairs.

The passage was so narrow that Connor and O'Hara had to proceed with their broad shoulders at an angle.

"Examine the walls with that light," said Travers. "This passage must open into some of the upstairs rooms."

Suddenly they came upon a niche, in which there was a ladder. The light revealed a trap-door directly above, secured by an ingenious device that permitted opening from above or below.

The trap dropped, they heard a scream, and Travers pushed back the rug that screened the opening, to find Mrs. Grover staring at him.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Grover," he said. "We've found the secret passage."

He clambered into the room, followed by the officers.

"And Evelyn——?"

"We hope to find her soon," Connor said. "Mike, you stay below, and close the door when I get up. I want to see how this trap works from above."

He drew himself into the room, and the trap closed with a squeak and a metallic click. Both Connor and Travers marvelled at the way the flooring matched.

"Fitted to precision!" exclaimed Connor. "Even the sawed edges match with the edges of the rest of the flooring. You'd naturally think they were nailed to joists. But how does the thing operate from above?"

They conjectured that there must be a spring hidden in the wall somewhere. Travers objected to searching for it, on the grounds that Evelyn was in danger, and he rapped on the door, O'Hara releasing it from below.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Grover," Travers said as they descended the ladder. "We'll do our best to locate her."

Once in the passage again, Connor wanted to continue on and explore the rest of the upper section, but Travers reminded him that they had better descend to the main passage again.

"Every moment counts," he said, as they crept carefully down the ancient stairs. Once in the main passage, they proceeded cautiously on, ears strained, flash-light shielded so as barely to provide enough light for their guidance. As they went forward, the passage widened and the ceiling receded enough to enable them to walk fully erect and three abreast.

THEY noted that the ceiling was raftered and boarded up with heavy timber, evidently hand hewn and whipsawed in the eighteenth century. The walls were of earth, studded with occasional boulders, these covered by moss and cobwebs. Rats abounded, scampering before them into the darkness. A bat, blinded by the light, crashed headlong into O'Hara's face, that worthy recoiling with a startled oath.

"Be quiet!" admonished Travers; "it's only a bat."

The passage began to turn, and suddenly they heard the sound of footsteps. Shutting off the light, they halted in the pitchy darkness, revolvers ready. The sound grew more audible—a sliding, shuffling walk. Then two small glowing spots appeared around the turn. The spots seemed to stop in mid-air and regard the three intruders like fiery eyes. Connor leveled his gun in the direction of the thing, brushing Travers coat, and the professor seized his wrist. For a tense moment they waited, noting that the sounds of footsteps had abruptly ceased. A stillness as of a tomb prevailed, save for the excited breathing of the explorers as they stared at the glowing eyes.

Then suddenly the eyes flew toward them, and Connor, in stepping back, dropped his flash-light to the ground. Travers ducked quickly as something brushed by him—something a part of those flaming eyes. There were three staccato reports from Connor's revolver, and a cry from Mike.

"Oh — help! Connor — for God's sake——"

Travers struck a match, to reveal O'Hara lying upon the ground, writhing in agony, blood trickling from his face.

"Mike!" Connor cried, stooping over him; "what was it?"

O'Hara only groaned, and Connor picked up the flash-light.

"Damn—the bulb is broken."

The match flickered out, and Travers lit another.

"Mike—for God's sake, what was it?" cried Connor. As they bent over the big detective they could see his lips trembling.

"Stabbed!" he whispered hoarsely; "oh—I can't see—I—can't move——"

"My God!" cried Connor; "hold that match closer, Travers. Can you see the light, Mike?"

"Light? No—where is it?" gasped O'Hara.

The match flamed within a foot of his face.

"Good Lord—he's blind!" whispered Connor hoarsely. "Look at his face—those cuts. By God, he's turning purple. . . ."

Travers lit another match, and O'Hara suddenly writhed and gave a convulsive shudder. Connor bent close. There was a moment of grim silence.

"Dead!" he gasped, in stupefied horror.

Doctor Grover gone—Evelyn his daughter gone. Are they both dead by this time? Travers can but wonder about this as he looks down at the still form of Mike O'Hara, lying at his feet mysteriously pierced through by some swift agent of Death. Who is to be the next victim of the dreaded Red Circle? *Will Travers get at the bottom of the mystery in time to save his own life? Read the startling developments of this mystery tale that are revealed in the March issue of* GHOST STORIES *Magazine, on the news-stands January 23rd. It has tense interest.*

The Man Who Borrowed a Ghost

(*Continued from page* 44)

We were still more astonished.

"Hesther Hawkes! Lord! What a name for a woman . . . with the quality of a rare . . . tropical flower! Lord!" He continued to stare at her as though bewitched. Then suddenly rising, he said briefly: "Present me, will you, Higgins, old man?" and started toward her.

It was the weirdest courtship anyone ever saw. What they talked about, no one ever knew, but to the outside world at least she seemed as coldly unbending with him as she had always been with everyone else. Yet, strangely, she seemed to hold him—perhaps by her very inaccessibility.

SUMMER faded into autumn, and then winter, and still he lingered on—fascinated, enthralled, by that strange woman. He followed her about like a person hypnotized, seeing her as often as she would let him, waiting on her hand and foot, showering her with rare and costly gifts that she did not scruple to accept, in spite of others' opinions.

People said that he had learned the secret of her great passion—the love of beautiful things—and with that secret would win her, but time went on and still she did not announce her engagement. The affair became the talk of the town and there was endless discussion as to what would come of it all.

To all questions the Stimpsons simply shrugged their shoulders. They knew nothing about her plans. We all knew Hesther, didn't we? She wouldn't be

likely to talk, even to them would she? Well——. He seemed like a nice young man, though, and wealthy—oh, quite wealthy! If Hesther wanted to marry him, they had no objections.

Then, one day right after Jim and I were married, he came to see Jim with an offer to buy Treetop Hill. At first Jim flatly refused to consider the idea. That and the land surrounding it had been in the family for years and Jim did not fancy parting with it. Then, too, we planned to build there ourselves sometime in the future.

"What do you want with it, anyway?" Jim had asked, at which Sidney had smiled a strange smile.

"Going to build a house—for Hesther. A beautiful house—with all the world stretched at its feet—for Hesther."

"Ah—so you're engaged?" I could not repress the question that was bothering the whole countryside.

"No-o. But we will be—when I've built the house." There was a far-away look in his eye as he sat silently gazing through the window. Then: "You will sell it to me, won't you Jim?"

"Well—tell you what I'll do. I might sell you half of it. There's plenty of room for both of us, I guess, and goodness knows when we'll be building ourselves."

So they shook hands over the deal and in a surprisingly short time work was begun on the house.

Then Jim's uncle died and we had to go to the city to look after the business he left him. I think it was about a year afterward that my attention was caught by a notice in one of the city papers. I had gotten the habit of reading the personal column every evening. Somehow it seemed to give me the warm, personal feeling I missed so sorely in the big, lonesome city. Well, as usual I was carefully reading every word on down the column when suddenly I came to this notice:

"Sidney. If there is any pity in your soul, come back. I love you.

HESTHER."

"Jim! Listen to this." I read him the notice. "Do you suppose——?"

"Sidney and Hesther, eh? Well, it may be just a coincidence. Have you heard anything about them in your letters from home?"

I hadn't. Indeed, I had been unusually lax in answering my correspondence and had heard nothing from home in some time. But I speedily got busy and wrote everyone to whom I owed letters, asking discreetly about the Hawkes romance. And before long I had the story—that is, as much of it as anyone knew.

SIDNEY had finished his house, and had presented it to Hesther on her birthday. I read reams of descriptive matter about the beauty and charm of that house. Of course, after that, everyone expected that the engagement would be announced any time. Sidney had been called to the city, a day or two after Hesther's birthday, and had stayed away a couple of weeks. During that period Hesther had left the Stimpson farm, bag and baggage, and had settled herself in the house, apparently prepared to stay.

Upon Sidney's return he had gone first to the farm, then to the house. The very same afternoon he returned to the Spear's farm, looking almost ready to die, had packed his things, paid his bill and left town without a word of explanation to anyone.

It was the general opinion that Hesther had accepted his presents and his house and then turned him down, and with one accord the town's-folk agreed to ostracise her. But she didn't give them a chance. Closing her door firmly on the world, she proceeded to live the life of a recluse. All of her provisions were sent her from a neighboring town, and when, in time, her flower gardens, the most beautiful ever seen in that part of the country, began to yield, she shipped the blossoms to a nearby city.

And so she lived, year after year. It was said that for awhile after Sidney left town, she had vanished, but no one was sure of that. I know, when fifteen years later, after Jim's death, I returned to Spratville and built my house on Treetop Hill, I would never have known that the gaunt, white-haired woman who was my neighbor was the same Hesther Hawkes I had known as a girl, but for the wild, haunted eyes of her that somehow had not changed, except in intensity.

Then, one day her little dog, the one companion of her solitude, had come crying to my door and would not go away, and instinct bade me follow him. He went racing across the intervening space between the houses, and sat down before the closed front door over there, whining and pawing and yelping piteously. Feeling that something unusual was in the wind, I pushed open the door and went in, and there on the floor lay Hesther, her wide eyes staring, unable to move. As I bent over her she breathed the one word: "Stroke!" over and over again.

Somehow I managed to get her into bed and telephoned for the doctor. In time he arrived, but it wasn't much use. Hesther was doomed, and in a few days she passed on. Before she died, though, she had in a lawyer, and made her will leaving the house and what little money she possessed, to the orphanage that had befriended her as a little girl.

FROM that time on, strange things began to happen around the Hawkes place. She was hardly buried, before an elaborate motor car drove up and an overdressed little woman and a pompous, portly, bewhiskered man of middle age climbed out and entered the house. Shortly thereafter a truck arrived, and trunks and baggage of one kind and another were unloaded and carried in. I was naturally curious to learn who my new neighbors might be, and after a couple of days I went over to call.

The woman, a Mrs. Browne, received me effusively and explained that her husband was chairman of the board of directors of the orphanage.

"We had several offers for the house," she explained, "but Mr. Browne said that inasmuch as he had given years of service to the institution he thought they owed him something in return. They didn't like the idea at first, but he managed to persuade them to let us have the house, at least for a period of years. A beautiful place," she added. "No wonder it's so famous. Built by Sidney Landon, the famous architect, wasn't it?"

"Why, yes. Did you know him, by any chance?"

Yes she knew him—that is to say, she knew someone who knew him abroad and she'd heard so much about him, she felt she could really say she knew him. Poor man! Poor, poor man! To think that he should have to die right at the height of his career and everything! They did say that his nephew,—did I know Albert? No? Well he was Sidney Landon's sister's boy, and people said he had brought him up like his own son when he was left an orphan as a little chap. And they did say the boy was even a finer architect than his uncle. These people she knew who had known them abroad said it was really beautiful, the way the uncle took him over all Europe, giving him a course in applied architecture, as you might say. Where was the boy now? She really didn't know.

She babbled on a lot more, but there was no further news about Sidney, and when I arose to go I had the feeling that this garrulous woman was hardly the person I would have chosen as my one and only neighbor on Treetop. Far rather Hesther's grim silence. Still——

In the days that followed I had plenty of cause to renew my original impression. Not only did Mrs. Browne constantly pester me with impromptu visits at the most inopportune and unexpected times, but she had all sorts of weird tales to tell about her new home—noises heard at night, groans and cries coming from the cellar and elsewhere . . . shadowy figures seen slinking furtively. . . .

The woman was petrified with fright. She wanted to move out at once, but her husband pooh-poohed the idea and said that most of the trouble lay in her own imagination. He heard the noises, but was sure there was some natural cause for them, and as for the "ghost"—as she called it—well, he had never seen it, and was sure she hadn't either.

I felt truly sorry for the poor thing. She was naturally terribly nervous to begin with, and the phenomena she described were almost too much for her. Several times she broke down and cried piteously and assured me that she wouldn't stand it another day—not another hour!

THEN one morning I awakened to the loud clanging of the front door-bell and slipping into my bathrobe I hurried down to find out the cause of the excitement. There stood my neighbor, and at her side was the portly Mr. Browne, both very white and disheveled.

"Mrs. Higgins. I'm sorry to bother you—have you met my husband? This is Mrs. Higgins, Thomas. My husband, Mr. Browne. As I say, we're sorry to bother you, but our phone hasn't been connected yet and we must get in touch with someone immediately."

"Why of course. Come right in. The phone is right there in the living-room, Mr. Browne."

As I hustled around to make them a cup of coffee Mrs. Browne sat in the kitchen rocker, rocking nervously back and forth and told me they were moving as soon as they could get someone to take their things away. She described in awful detail the advent of a ghost that had prowled about the grounds all night. She had seen it from their bed-room window and had called Mr. Browne. Then he had seen it and had shot at it from the house.

"Why, Mrs. Higgins, he must have hit it, but it only vanished and reappeared farther down the path. And then he shot at it again and again it disappeared and then popped up in the front yard. Oh, Mrs. Higgins, I wouldn't go through such a night again for anything in this world! Yes, we're leaving."

After they had gone, bag and baggage, I went over and searched the grounds carefully, and then the house, but there was no sign of anything untoward, and I couldn't help feeling that the Brownes were the victims of their own bad nerves. They must have spread the story broadcast, as they departed, though, for the sun had hardly set that evening before a little group of town's-folk began to gather at a safe distance from the house, and after vaguely wondering what the excitement was all about, it occurred to me that they were there to see the ghost.

It really amused me, and I went down, smiling, to josh them a little about their curiosity. We stood talking and jesting down there for awhile and then I invited them to come up and sit on my porch, assuring them that they would get as good a view of the Hawkes place from there as they would from the road, and they gladly accepted my invitation.

We sat about, as the night grew deeper, gossiping about one thing and another, the ghost almost forgotten. Then suddenly one of the girls gave a piercing shriek and pointed in terror toward the Hawkes house. With one accord we jumped to our feet and crowded about her. Following the direction of her gaze, we saw a filmy-white figure moving about the garden in the rear of the house. A little cry of terror arose from the crowd. For a time we stood there, petrified with fear, then——

Slowly, the figure seemed to disappear among the trees. We stood dumbstruck, too scared to move, awaiting its return. But we saw nothing more of it—that night.

From that time on, Treetop Hill was simply swarmed with people every evening from sundown on. And practically every night either the ghost appeared or strange lights were seen in various windows of the house. Several people attempted to solve the mystery, but apparently as soon as anyone appeared on the grounds, the ghost dissolved into thin air.

Then came the night that Davey Perkins took matters into his own hands. We sat watching him for a time, prowling about over there in the moonlight, then he vanished around a corner of the house. Half an hour, an hour, we waited, but still he did not return, and as the minutes crawled slowly by our uneasiness increased.

THE awards for Opinions on GHOST STORIES, issue of October, went to:

1st award of $10.00

J. R. GREGG

of Devore, California

2nd award of $5.00

MURIEL E. EDDY

of Providence, Rhode Island

3rd award of $3.00

B. C. BLACK

of Durham, North Carolina

SOME ONE will collect the awards for opinions on this issue. Why not you?

Finally I stood up and announced that I was going over and find out what had become of Davey. I started out, but before I had gone more than a few steps down the path, the entire party was pattering along at my heels. I venture to say that every heart there was beating more rapidly than usual. We were all of us excited and keyed up for anything but certainly none of us was prepared for what we found.

WE made our way slowly, noiselessly as possible, through the undergrowth and around back of the house, but there was no sign of Davey—or the ghost. Cautiously we crept around the house, to the front door and there, to our surprise, was a light coming through the cracks. Motioning to the others to stand back, I walked up to the door and gave it a push, and as it swung open I was momentarily blinded by a glare of lights. I closed my eyes for a second, then opened them, and saw before me the rather surprised face of Davey Perkins and two other persons—a boy and girl, both strangers, both well-dressed and attractive.

"Oh, Mrs. Higgins—I'm so sorry. We've been so busy talking here I just about forgot that you folks would be waiting and worrying about me." Davey's face was a study in chagrin.

"Well, young man, we certainly were —both. So we came over in a body to pick up your corpse—or whatever was left of you." I smiled at him, then went to the door and called out to the others to come in.

"I really am awfully sorry. You see, I met these folks, just coming in as I was going out. I've been telling them about the ghost, and they just won't believe me. This is Mrs. Graham, and her husband, Mr. Graham. They've just bought the house and came up to look it over."

The girl bid us all welcome to "our home," as she laughingly put it, and the boy seconded the sentiment. There was something strangely familiar about this boy, I thought, as he moved about bringing out chairs for everybody. Where had I met him? I kept asking myself, but it was not until he spoke of the thing himself that I saw the likeness.

"I was just telling Davey, here," he explained, when we were all seated, "that my uncle designed and built this house, and as soon as I saw it, I wanted it."

"So you're Sidney Landon's nephew!" I burst out.

"Yes." He looked at me, grinning for all the world like the old Sidney. Then: "I'll bet I know who you are. You're Martha Brewer—who married Jim Higgins? Am I right?"

No one had called me that for years, and the use of my maiden name brought a strange warmth and a flood of memories to my heart. "Sure are," I answered, laughing.

"I just knew it!" He looked at me a long moment and chuckled. "You're exactly like Uncle Sid described you. He was mighty fond of both you and Mr. Higgins, and he often told me the story of how you sold him half of Treetop Hill, to build his dream house on."

For a few moments we sat in silence, then he continued. "It's even more beautiful than he told me. Why, the first moment I set eyes on it, I said to

Dorothy: 'This is the most beautiful house I ever saw',—didn't I Dot?—'and we must get this old woman to sell it to us.' But she wouldn't even let us in, much less talk business."

FOR the rest of the evening we sat there chatting with the crowd, mainly about the ghost. Albert Graham—and for that matter, Dorothy, too—were highly amused at the idea of their new home being haunted. "But after all, what if it is? I guess we can stand a ghost if we have to, to get this lovely house. If old lady Hawkes is still hanging around, that's O. K. We should worry!" Then they both laughed.

When it came time to go home, I persuaded the Grahams to come over and spend the night at my place. They said their things would be along in the morning and seemed grateful for my hospitality. "We had planned to drive back to town for the night," said Dorothy, "but this way will be much better."

When the rest of the crowd had finally departed homeward, we sat around the fire-place in my living-room and talked and talked, and I learned the other side of Hesther Hawke's story.

"Do you know, I think Uncle Sid loved that woman to the day he died," Albert said, a far-away look in his eyes. "He'd never admit it, of course, but he never married, you know, and when he'd tell me about her, the strangest, sweetest expression would come into his eyes.

"You see, she hurt him terribly. He'd always told her he meant to marry her some day, and though she never exactly acquiesced, she kept him hanging on, hanging on. He told me she was a 'poor, warped, beautiful soul that needed nourishing and loving,' and somehow he felt he was the person to give her what she needed. She loved beautiful things, and he thought he'd win her by giving her the kind of things she loved—just as a beginning. After that, when they were married, he planned to make her life—their whole relationship—so beautiful that gradually the soul he thought he understood so well, would develop and blossom out like a flower in the sunshine.

"Something of a poet, Uncle Sid was," he added wistfully. "But that woman," he went on fiercely, "just didn't have any soul, from what I can make out. She took his presents and his house, and then sent him packing in no uncertain terms. Told him she had never asked him for anything, and if he insisted upon giving them to her, it wasn't her fault. What we'd call a 'gold-digger' today."

"So that's what she did, eh?" I had always believed something of the sort, as did everyone else in Spratville. Then I remembered the advertisement Jim and I had seen in the personal column and told him about it.

"NO—you don't say!" He gave a long whistle. "She did that, did she? Well . . . what do you know about that! If Uncle Sid had seen that, he would have come racing back on the first boat. He was probably in Europe at that time. Lord! Isn't life the darndest——"

We sat silently going over the story in our own minds, each speculating, no doubt, as to what would have happened had Sidney and Hesther actually married.

"You know," Albert said at last, "Uncle Sid said he was so unhinged, and chagrined, and beside himself with grief and rage, at some of the things she said to him in his last talk with her, that he lost his head and made a grab at her. He had never even touched her, before that, and she fought like a tiger, but I guess he was pretty mad, and strong as an ox. He said he just held her in his arms and kissed her all he wanted to—just that once. Then he left her to her house and went away forever. Uncle Sid was always ashamed of what he did that night, but I'll bet my hat it was that kiss that woke her up to the way she really felt about him? Poor Uncle Sid!"

We talked awhile longer about Hesther that night, and they told me that a few days before her death they had called, hoping she would let them go through the house. Albert had lived abroad with Sidney, most of his life, but it had always been his ambition to make a pilgrimage, some day, to his uncle's dream house. Then when Sidney had died, and Dorothy and he, but recently married, had returned to their native country, almost the first thing they did was to journey to Spratville.

They had gone directly from the train to Hesther's house, but she had received them belligerently on the door-step and ordered them off the premises. Albert thought that possibly if she knew who he was, she might let him in, but at the mere mention of Sidney's name she had turned into a raging fury.

"Don't let me see you back here again!" shouted old Hesther.

They stood amazed, wondering if she had gone insane.

We compared dates, and I found that it was on the day of their visit that she had had the stroke which had ended her life. What terrible emotions had been stirred in the breast of that strange woman at the mention of her lost love, we could only imagine.

IT was well on toward morning when I finally showed the folks their room and went about closing up for the night. As I passed their door on my way to bed, a snatch of conversation made me pause instinctively to listen.

"Well, you were nearly caught tonight, old thing, weren't you?" From Albert.

"Yeah. But that's all over now—thank heaven! We wont' have to play ghost any more, will we, now that the house is actually ours?" Dorothy was yawning as she spoke.

"I don't know—perhaps we ought to give another performance or two, just to avoid suspicion."

"Well, I'm not going to—so there! I haven't liked the thing from start to finish, Al, as I've told you right along. It—it didn't seem, well—honest."

"It was honest—though not exactly ethical, perhaps. But, Dot, Uncle Sid would have wanted us to have the house—you know he would! And there weren't any rightful heirs. We were perfectly willing to pay for the darned

place, and if the fool asylum hadn't been so obstinate, we'd have had it without all this fuss. It wasn't our fault if they made us haunt the place in order to buy it from them. Good Lord! Don't be so squeamish."

"Well, I'm glad it's over, anyway. But you'd better go over and disconnect those wires so the walls won't begin knocking some time when we're having company. Did you take the victrola out of that empty well in the cellar?"

"No, I was going to do that tonight. Gee, Dot, that record we made will be worth keeping. I never in my life heard such groans and——" There were squeals of laughter, then: "Shh! You'll wake the house. Put out the light and let's try to get some sleep."

I came to, suddenly. Merciful heavens! Eavesdropping on my own guests! I blushed as I tiptoed by the door, but my shoulders were shaking with suppressed mirth. So that was the answer to the spooks and queer sounds. These kids borrowd a "ghost" in order to get their uncle's house!

Well, as Albert said, it certainly wasn't ethical—but after all, who could blame them? They were, only kids. I couldn't blame Albert for wanting to own the house and it seemed only right that he should have it. The orphanage could make much better use of the money than the house, anyway. And who was I to judge anyone else? I asked myself. It was none of my business. I decided I'd keep what I had heard "under my hat" as the saying goes.

In the days that followed, I came to love those children almost as much as though they were my own. They set to work rearranging the house, and together we planned all sorts of improvements for Treetop. Apparently they had decided against anything further in the ghost line, and gradually people began to believe that there was some sort of natural explanation for the apparition they had witnessed. Maybe it was only a reflection or something, they said, and the matter speedily passed out of our minds.

I GUESS the young folks had been living there four or five months, when one night, long after I had gone to bed, I was awakened by the ringing of the telephone. I slipped downstairs to answer it, and heard Albert's voice, tremulous, panicky, on the line. "Aunty Higgins? This is a terrible time to wake you up, but could you come over? Dot is having hysterics and I'm scared to death that there's——"

"Sure, child. I'll be right over." I cut him off short and darted upstairs for my clothes. Poor kids! I wondered what was up.

In a few moments I was ringing their door-bell and Albert let me in, his face like a piece of chalk. "Oh, I'm so glad you've come," he almost sobbed.

"Where's Dot?" I asked, at once. "What's the matter with her?"

"Oh, she's terribly upset, but she's beginning to pull herself together."

I followed him upstairs and found Dorothy huddled up on the bed, her shoulders still shaking convulsively. "What's the matter, honey?" I went over and put my arms around her and she clung to me like a frightened child. "Oh, Aunty Higgins," she sobbed, "I'm so glad you're here." Then: "Tell her, Albert—tell her everything."

"Well—Aunty Higgins, we're both scared to death. There's been a ghost wandering around here—that woman Hesther—and I'm not fooling! We both saw Hesther's ghost. She came in here and shook her fist at us. Dorothy fainted and I threw a pillow at the ghost, but she just stood there grinning wickedly at me. Then gradually she began to fade out, still grinning, grinning. . . . Oh, I know I sound like a lunatic, but honest to heaven we actually saw it and——"

Whether he saw it or not, the boy was undoubtedly terribly shaken and I drew him down to the bed on the other side of me.

"Tell her the rest—about what we did, Albert," Dorothy insisted, tremulously.

Then he broke down and confessed to me the hoax they had played on the orphanage, in order to get the house—most of which I already knew.

"We had a little camp, outside of town," he explained, "and we used to ride up here at night and Dot would dress up and parade around like a ghost, while I kept watch. The minute I saw anyone coming I'd warn her, and the ghost would just disappear.

"I rigged up a lot of electrical appliances in the cellar, too," he went on, gloomily. "We had a way of making a couple of boards in the wall bang around, by just pushing a button, and by pushing another button we could start the old victrola or stop it. We made that record out of a grand opera record by boring a hole in it for the center pin, an inch or so off the center. When you play it that way it makes the most horrible, blood-curdling wails you ever heard.

"Mrs. Browne certainly thought so," I remarked dryly.

"Oh, Aunty Higgins, you'll never have any use for us again. We've been awful fools, and we're terribly sorry." Dorothy was weeping afresh and it was all I could do to quiet her and reassure them both that I loved them no matter what they had done.

"But this thing tonight? You're sure it wasn't someone trying your own tricks on you?" I finally asked them.

"By Jove—that's an idea!" Albert sat up very straight. "But I don't see how it could have been. Why, I saw the thing fade out gradually until there was nothing left but thin air. Still—I was pretty much——"

He sat and pondered the idea for a long time while Dorothy and I assured each other that that was the probable explanation. Then: "Well, we'll watch and see what happens!"

I GUESS we were all pretty firmly convinced that some outside agent was actually manipulating the thing, or we should none of us have had the courage to face the next few nights. In order that the kids should not be entirely alone I volunteered to stay over there until we had solved the mystery, and each night at sun-down I journeyed across to the "Hawkes Place"—as we still called it.

The first night I fell asleep in the little room they had given me down the hall from theirs, with the feeling that nothing was likely to happen with me in the house. But I was wrong. In the middle of the night I was awakened by a crash, and almost at the same moment there came a shriek from Dorothy. Slipping into my bathrobe and slippers I raced down the hall and found the Grahams both standing leaning out the window, talking excitedly.

"She went right out after it—I saw her!" Dorothy was calling. "And——"

"You're crazy, Dot. She simply dissolved into air, same as she did the other night. At least, that's the way it looked to me."

"What happened?" I broke in sharply. They both pulled in their heads and turned toward me.

"She came——" they started together, then Albert took up the thread of the story. "She came right into the room. We were both awake and saw her—and she stood there a moment shaking her fist at us. Then she picked up Dorothy's hat-box and threw it out the window. It's down on the lawn right now. Then she disappeared. Dorothy thinks she jumped out after the hat-box."

"Well—I never!" Then: "Let's go down and see what we can find!" and the three of us started down just as we were.

On the lawn we found Dorothy's red leather hat-box, a hole in it where it had hit a sharp rock, her hats scattered all about it. But search the grounds as we might, we could find no trace of anyone. Finally we gave it up and returned to the house where we sat talking things over for a long time, too excited to sleep. Finally, there being nothing else we could think of to do, we went to bed, but the dawn found us still wide-eyed and mystified.

The following night—in fact, for three nights following, much the same thing happened, except that each night a different object was thrown from the window. The first night it was a valise. The second night it was a handful of silver toilet articles from the dressing table. The third night, Dorothy's clothes, which she had placed on a chair upon removing them.

BY this time we were all pretty well shaken, as you can imagine, but to save our lives we couldn't seem to think of anything to do about the situation. We had searched every nook and crevice about the place, but there certainly wasn't anyone around. Both the kids declared the phantom actually did dissolve before their eyes. Personally, I had never encountered the thing, and although they were convinced now that it was a ghost, I was still skeptical.

Excitement had reached such a high pitch that none of us could stand the thought of bed after the fourth visitation, so we decided to sit up all night and wait for the ghost—if that's what it actually was. It was a cold night and we had a fire blazing in the living-room grate, a huge log fire whose friendly light penetrated the farthest corners

of the room. We had been sitting there perhaps for an hour, chatting about our recent experiences, and the more we talked, the less real the whole experience seemed.

"I could almost believe we dreamed the whole thing," said Albert. That was exactly the way I felt about it. Dorothy, though, was more practical.

"Yes? Well, take a run up and look at my hat-box and four hats, all ruined. You can't make me believe it was only a dream. The old girl wants to get us out of this house and is trying her best to throw us out. We're going to have more trouble with her before we're through—you mark my words."

"Nice cheerful soul, aren't you?" Albert laughed. Then: "How about some coffee?"

"Grand idea! Who'll make it?"

"We all will." And we trailed out to the kitchen and began boiling the water and snooping about for cookies.

Suddenly I noticed an odor as of something burning and went over to the stove to investigate, but there was nothing cooking. Only the water boiling for the coffee.

"Say! Something *is* burning! Smell it?" Albert had noticed it too. "Take a look at that fire in the living-room, will you, Dot?"

Dorothy went toward the front of the house, and in a second her terrified cry brought us both running. The living-room was a blazing furnace and we had all we could do to tear from the house by the back door before the fire spread to the kitchen. The thing was all so sudden, we were stupefied, and for a few moments could do nothing but stand at a distance staring up at the house. Then Albert caught sight of the thing again and pointed wildly at the upper story shouting excitedly, "Look! Look! There she is!"

Her figure was just visible, beneath the burning brand she carried in one outstretched hand, then as the flame shot up behind her we could see her quite plainly, and I am convinced beyond a doubt that it actually was Hesther Hawkes. I would have known that unique figure anywhere, and her gesture as she reached up to set fire to a curtain was one I had seen a dozen times. Then the flames shot up all about her and she disappeared from sight.

"Lord! Oh, Lord!" breathed Albert. "Well, she succeeded in putting us out, all right, all right!"

"Albert, can't we save it? Can't we get the fire department or someone?" Dorothy demanded excitedly, and just then we heard the sound of a siren off in the distance.

"There they are now! Some one must have seen the blaze and sent in an alarm," I cried, running madly about looking for something to carry water in.

THE next hour or two are like a nightmare in my memory. People. fire engines, smoke, excitement. And all in vain. The house was razed to the ground, wiped out completely, in spite of anything we could do to save it. There in the cold light of morning lay the charred remains, still smoking, as we stood apart wearily viewing the scene.

"Well, what now?" asked Albert listlessly.

"How about some coffee?" I asked.

And with a sigh of resignation we turned our backs on the ashes of Sidney Landon's dream.

IT all happened some years ago, and sometimes it all seems like a dream. I look out over the sweep of lovely flowers Dorothy had planted where the house stood—"Hesther's Garden" she calls it—and ask myself if it is possible that for twenty-five years a beautiful house cloaking misery and desolation and heart-break, actually stood there.

Dorothy and Albert are traveling now. But when they come back, as they always do sooner or later, they come straight to me on Treetop Hill.

They talk of building a duplicate of Sidney's dream house one day, but I doubt that they'll ever do it. For one thing Dorothy, for some strange reason, is too fond of "Hesther's Garden," ever to disturb it.

Does that poor, unhappy spirit still wander about? I wonder!

We never see her. But I sometimes suspect that perhaps she comes back now and then to find peace among her flowers—as she did in life.

The Spirit Quarterback

(*Continued from page* 27)

There could be no winning with such a team.

The next day, of course, we would rest. When the men left the training table after the final practise, one could see stark defeat on their faces. The coaches said nothing. There was nothing left to be done. But in my own heart there was a wave of rebelliousness that all of Flash Dunham's great work should be wasted—that we should thus accept defeat. He would want us all to play the harder because of his absence.

MY mind was full of this thought when I turned in for the night. Perhaps it was to be expected that I'd dream about the game and Flash Dunham. But the vividness of the picture I conjured up in my sleep surpassed any dream I had ever had. It was an actual, living experience.

I do not think it was a dream—it was a presentiment, and a supernatural agent, having a purpose.

I was in the big Evandale stadium, which was crowded to the top—and it was the day of the Barrington game. The crowd was waving pennants and cheering like mad, and there down in front was Flash Dunham, acting as cheer leader! Not in uniform—in gaudy sweater and waving a megaphone. And he was the inspiration of that crowd!

So amazed was I at this spectacle that I paid no attention to the teams on the field. But something took possession of me that made me feel that Evandale could not lose—with Flash Dunham pointing the way to victory.

I came to my senses with the shock of let-down that accompanies sudden release from the grip of an electric current—and found myself bathed in perspiration.

A new spirit had taken control! What did it matter that Flash was dead? . . . that he was not there to lead the team himself? His spirit was still alive, and that would be enough to wipe up the ground with Barrington. The boys must simply be made to feel that Flash wanted them to win.

I was the first one present at the training table that morning—filled with a strange elation. I could hardly wait until Coach Sanders showed up. I was one bundle of nerves, fearing that every minute would be too late to get my message to the boys. When he came in I took him aside, and though he had never given me any notice off the field, there must have been something in my face that held his attention. In my excitement I even forgot the dignity that was due the head coach.

"See here, Sanders!" I blurted out, "What's the matter with these guys? Why don't they snap out of it? Don't they know tomorrow's the big game—that they've got to wake up or else——"

Sanders eyed me coldly. "I'd say that you've been dead on your feet yourself, Barton. Not that I blame you," he hastened to add. "You were his roommate and his closest——"

"That's all over!" I interrupted heatedly. "What good are we doing Flash Dunham by weeping over him? What he'd want us to do is go out and win. It's time to cut out this mourning. When are the fellows going to wake up?"

Sanders was looking at me with a peculiar expression.

"Why don't you tell it to them?" he said mildly. "They're all in there looking as if it was the Day of Judgment. You've got my permission to tell 'em anything you want to."

I BRUSHED past him into the room where the men were gathered at the table. I had no plan, no purpose, except to stir them out of their apathy. And for the first time in my life I made a speech.

I told them how Flash Dunham had worked and toiled for the Barrington game. How he would have expected them to win if he had been there himself to lead them; how it was the rankest kind of betrayal to let themselves fall to pieces—that he would turn in his grave if Evandale lost.

I bawled them out good and plenty.

Then I said that I, who had been Flash Dunham's closest friend, would be the first to forget that he ever lived if that would let them take their minds off their loss.

There was a shuffling of feet and a scraping of chairs before I got through. I saw the light of battle come again into the eyes of some of the boys. Others stared straight ahead with clenched jaws and resolute expressions. Coach Sanders came up behind me as I drew to a close, short of breath and a little frightened. His tone was mild as ever.

"Barton here has the right idea," he said. "If you fellows can get into the same frame of mind, maybe we'd better run through a few signals. What do you say?"

As if they were actuated by one mind, the men stood up and a moment later were trooping out on the field.

"Barton," called out Sanders, "—you take the first eleven!"

I stopped in my tracks amazed, as did one or two others. It was the first time I had ever been sent in with the Varsity —even in practise. I could hardly believe my ears. But there was Bill Stecher, who had naturally fallen into Flash Dunham's place, going off with the scrubs in answer to a sharp order from Sanders.

I took my place behind the line. There was no scrimmage, of course, but I put the boys through the various formations with all the pep there was in me. They were a changed crowd today. They started off each play like the crack of a whip—were once again on a trigger's edge for action.

But they were not quite the same as they had been before, however. There was no horseplay, no laughing, no talking. It was a serious bunch of men that was to face Barrington the next day, and I caught a look of satisfaction on the face of Coach Sanders. It was the first time he had worn that look in days.

Later on, when we were rubbing each other down in the shower room, Coach Sanders paused for a moment as he passed by.

"Good work, Barton—mighty good work," he said. And then, as an afterthought, "Too bad you don't carry a little weight."

I knew that was the death knell of my hopes. He had used me to fire the boys with something of my own enthusiasm, and also perhaps to stir Bill Stecher out of his apathy by placing him with the scrubs. This accomplished, I could resume my place on the sidelines.

AND that is where I was when the whistle blew for the kick-off next day. The stands were full and there was a bright sun shining—ideal football weather—and the Evandale boys showing the same impetuosity and determination that always characterized them upon going into a game. But this time it was different. Their spirit, it is true, had returned. But for the first time in three years they were without the masterly, guiding hand of Flash Dunham.

Could Stecher put them through this supreme test? There was not one among us there on the fringe of the playing field who did not await the outcome with bated breath. Coach Sanders himself, pacing up and down the line of substitutes, could not conceal the strain that he was under. The whistle blew, McQuade's kick soared high and far down the field—and the game was on!

The story of that contest, historic in the records of both Evandale and Barrington, may be found play by play in the newspapers of the day. It is no part of my tale to recount the varying fortunes of the game—how the beef and muscle of the Barrington team found hole after hole in the Evandale line and went plunging down the field only to be held by Evandale—once under our very goal posts. How McQuade's powerful shoe kept us time and again out of danger by punts that staved off the foe. How the Evandale line broke time and again on the stone-wall defense of Barrington whenever Stecher tried a line play.

I found myself watching the game with a feeling of detachment that I had never before experienced. The tension and nervousness that I had felt up to the moment of the first whistle had disappeared. Unconsciously I found myself anticipating plays, analyzing the Barrington attack, able actually to call each formation before it was in motion.

It did not occur to me how useful this would be if I were actually on the field instead of on the side lines. I hardly realized myself what was passing through my mind with each lineup—only that I seemed to be penetrating each play with a keenness that gave me a new thrill of interest in the game.

Now and then I found myself on my feet cursing Bill Stecher for what seemed to me inexcusable blindness. Again I would shout to one of the ends to play out for a dash around his end. But my frantic words were unheeded. Not even the fellows around me paid the least attention. Hunched up and with eyes glued to the field their only thought was "Hold 'em, Evandale! Hold 'em!"

IN the dressing room between halves, with the score at 0—0, the feeling first came over me that I might be able to do something to stave off defeat. The players had come in weary and grimy from the field—their spirit unbroken. But no team could stand that awful battering from the Barrington line without showing it. Flat they lay on their backs getting what rest they could before the grueling, grinding struggle should commence again.

The substitutes showed the true state of affairs even more plainly. Apart from the actual conflict, they had seen how the strength and stamina of the line had gradually been sapped. They had seen the fiery enthusiasm and dash of the men grow imperceptibly less, as scrimmage followed scrimmage. They had seen one man slow up and another limp as they resumed their places in the line. All this, they knew, would tell in the second half. The real test was yet to come.

Somehow I could not understand the gloom that hung over the dressing room like a pall. To me it seemed that victory was assured. It seemed so easy to solve the bone-crushing Barrington attack, and I was surprised that the boys showed none of my confidence in the outcome.

The whole thing seemed as clear to me as if the game was already played and the final score marked up. I found myself, by some strange influence, shaking hands with Flash Dunham and congratulating him on his magnificent work in that marvelous game. Never had I seen a game played so skillfully as that game had been. It had been a work of art—Flash Dunham's art, and no man had ever before seen anything quite like it! It was, in fact, a triumph of brain over brawn, lightning speed directed by shrewd skill, over ponderous muscle expending itself in futile rushes.

It was with a sudden start that I caught myself and realized where I was —standing among the prostrate Evandale men, with an air of deep depression all around me. I rubbed my eyes in a daze. Surely I had been shaking hands with Flash Dunham but a moment before and had congratulated him on the way in which he had figured out Holman's attempt at a double pass play—and broken it!

I was on the verge of telling the men this. What could it mean if it was not a message from Flash Dunham that the game was won if they would but show the courage that he expected of them, and that he was there with them in that room, and would be out there with them on the field in the second half?

But before I could make up my mind to act, time was called.

FROM the start of the second half it became apparent that Stecher had decided on a purely defensive game. There was no attempt now to gain ground. The only idea was to save the men as much as possible and last out the time without being scored upon. Long kicks by McQuade repeatedly drew Barrington far down the field, there to take up their task again of hammering and plunging.

But all this would have been of no avail if we had not gotten the best of the breaks. Early in the half one of the Barrington men got clear away in the open field, only to stumble and miss an opportunity for a touchdown. Again, with the ball within a few yards of the goal line, there was a fumble which Evandale recovered, and once more the threat of a score was averted. But as the minutes sped by it began to look like a certainty that only a miracle could prevent a Barrington score.

And as I sat on the sidelines I was devoured with a consuming desire to get into the game before it was too late. I knew now that I had the power to stave off defeat, perhaps even to win. It was something that I had no control over myself. I had not stopped to try and analyze it. *Some force outside of me was coaching me on every play used by Barrington.*

Each time the ball was put in play I was conscious of where it was going. I knew where the efforts of Evandale were going to waste—knew that our team was being beaten even while I had the power to undo it. The knowledge of this devoured me, maddened me, and

made me act like a man gone crazy.

Time and again I rushed up to Sanders begging him to let me go in. On every side subs were stripping off their sweaters in response to his nod—for the regulars were dropping out at every play. I was consumed with eagerness and desperation. But coaches are familiar with frantic players at the closing game of every season. Sanders simply strode up and down the line, nervous, silent and utterly ignoring me.

THEN came the play when Bill Stecher failed to rise after making a particularly vicious tackle. The players crowded round, the water-boys dashed out, doctors stooped over him.

In came the group carrying him painfully off the field. A collarbone broken —or something like that. I did not know —nor did I care. This was my chance. I grabbed Sanders roughly by the arm.

"Let me go in!" I panted. "Send me in! I know all their plays! I know I can beat them!"

The words rushed out without any more reason or meaning than if I had been a baby. For I had no way to explain to Sanders what I meant—that Flash Dunham's spirit was seething within me. He gave me not a glance, and waved to Harker, who was already taking off his sweater, to go in. I slumped to the ground, hopeless—full of futile rage—almost in tears.

The teams lined up. Barrington was tearing at will through our weakened formation, though the boys were fighting desperately. Time was almost up—if they could stick it out the game might yet be a draw.

Barrington, too, evidently was worried about the final bell and adopted new tactics. By a series of cross-bucks they got the ball to the center of the field. Then began their march through the line towards the goal posts. Their intention was plain. If the Evandale resistance stiffened, as it always had done in the last fifteen yards, they could still win with a field goal.

Yards at a time they reeled off. Finally they were inside the twenty-five yard line. Then Evandale held. Once . . . twice! . . . with the energy born of despair. The Barrington quarter fell back for a kick. The formation was evident —Evandale scattered out.

Then it was that I shrieked out:

"A fake! Watch the ends!" But my words were lost.

A double pass, and the Barrington full-back was streaking around right end—ten yards gained before he was brought down. The ball was now on our ten yard line.

A figure rose up beside me as I ground my fingers in the dirt in my rage.

"What did you call that play, Barton?" The voice sounded strange to me. It was Sanders speaking. He was peering at me with a curious look.

"It was a fake. I knew they'd try the end," I replied.

"How did you know?"

"I know their plays. I can feel it inside me . . . somehow." I faltered over the last words. They seemed inadequate. But Sanders seemed to be looking clear through me with his penetrating gaze. Perhaps he saw something that I was not aware of. His arm went up. Time was called.

"Go on in, Barton," he said to me. "There's two minutes to play—do what you can."

FAINTLY I was conscious of the clamor as I ran out on the field—Barrington yelling like mad for a touchdown—Evandale imploring the team to hold. Yet in all the excitement and confusion I knew that my mind had never been so clear. It was almost as if I were not really one of the sweating, steaming men that surrounded me.

All I had to do was to remain cool and listen intently to the word that would come. I knew it would come. It had been with me all afternoon, and now it would not desert me. I drew the men around me for a moment to give them whispered instructions.

"Do as I say, fellows. I'll call the man with the ball. And when I yell his name—you get him!"

The Barrington signals were given, and a shift followed. I watched them with every sense and nerve alert. Then as if a voice had told me, I knew where the play would come.

"Watch Holman!" I cried.

The mass began to move. Every man on our line swept toward the flank where Holman was waiting. As he received the ball on a double pass we broke through. Someone got him from behind, and he was thrown for a loss of eight yards.

It was the first time we had broken up a Barrington play that day!

I trotted back to my place supremely confident. This was what I knew would happen. I had never doubted it for a moment. There was no possibility of mistake.

I took my place in line almost with a smile. There was a figure standing there beside me—a faint, shadowy form of which I was only vaguely conscious. But I did not turn to look. I took it for granted, it ought to be there—knew who it was.

Again the signals. Again that clear and vivid warning, and my shout to the men. Again we broke through, regaining two more yards.

The din was deafening as I scrambled out of the heap, but my wits were clear. Barrington would try a kick now. It was their only hope. The only question was—how was it to be blocked?

As the ball was passed I yelled "Through tackle!" McQuade charged low and fierce. He found a yawning hole between guard and tackle, and as he leaped into the air—caught the kick full on his chest!

FAR up soared the ball. As if in response to some sudden instruction I streaked far out to the right. Scrambling hands were flung aloft as the ball came down. Someone struck at it.

Was it chance—or some unseen power —that sent the ball flying into my arms?

I had no interference. The whole pack was behind. There were two Barrington men between me and the goal. I never gave them a thought but raced

on as if I had a clear field before me. I knew I would not be stopped.

For, alongside me as I ran I became conscious of a swift cool breeze that seemed to envelop a faint, shadowy shape. Vague and intangible it was—there at my shoulder. Out of the corner of my eye I watched it gratefully. It kept even with my left elbow, between me and the Barrington players.

One of them was racing like a deer to head me off, but I went on confidently and with utter assurance. The faint shadowy form departed a little from my side, swinging out towards the Barrington man. As their paths crossed, the Barrington player launched himself for a flying tackle——

The sport writers next day said he had misjudged his distance. I know better. As he sprang forward he was downed in his tracks by a sure and certain hand.

On I went heading straight for the goal posts. Gregg, the Barrington quarter, was coming straight for me, but I never swerved or faltered. As he drew near I heard again the swiftly rushing breeze at my heels. This time it did not keep behind me, but swept on, a faint, shadowy form, racing straight for Gregg.

I paid no further attention. That I need not worry about Gregg was certain as the day. With head down and every muscle straining I went on for the goal line.

When the glow of victory was over, and many a time since that eventful game, people have claimed that if Gregg had not slipped and fallen just as he was closing in on me—I would never have scored that touchdown.

Slipped and fallen!

The trouble is, as I said in the beginning, people get old and forgetful. They forget that Flash Dunham never missed a tackle!

The Soul of Black Tobias

(*Continued from page* 16)

As well drive a knife into Aunt Mathilda as say a disparaging word against one of her pets. One word brought on another with the result that Aunt Jessie stormed out of the house, bag and baggage, within half an hour. Her parting shot was:

"While that cat is here, I stay away! There isn't room in the same house for that beast and me!"

The cat remained. And, Jessie stayed away, which was characteristic of her stubbornness. It was also characteristic of Aunt Mathilda's pride that the breech never healed. The next time Jessie entered the house she came to Aunt Mathilda's funeral, a good seven years after the quarrel that started over Tobias.

QUICKLY I searched the spinnet desk, looked behind the large cheval glass on the east wall, ran my hand over the mattresses on the bed—all in vain. And the bedrooms on that floor yielded no better results. Then I went through the attic—into trunks, packing boxes of clothes, pictures and what-not. But I found no will.

Night came, and I realized that I had on my hands a bigger problem than I dreamed of.

Hungry by this time, I went to a neighborhood boarding house and had supper. And before I went back I called up my wife by long distance.

"Oh, Jim, I do wish you'd hurry home!" she said. "This poor child Grace is so upset I don't know what to do with her. She keeps saying 'My Aunt Mathilda. My music. There'll be no music for me now, for I don't know where Miss Markham kept her money. Oh, how can I study my music now?' It's really heartbreaking, Jim, to hear the child go on."

"Tell her I'll have the money Aunt Mathilda meant for her music, right enough. I won't quit until I do. Mother her a bit, dear. Yes, I'm all right. Don't worry," and after talking a minute or two about the children I hung up.

Back in the house, I felt satisfied that I was not to be successful if I kept looking for normal hiding places. Safe, desks, trunks—they were hopeless. So that night I set to work to find a hollow wall.

With the metal ferrule of my walking stick I started tapping at the panelled walls of the dining room. Hardly a square foot escaped me, yet the solid foundations of those walls nowhere was broken.

Next I went over the living room walls. Nothing there. Then I went up to Aunt Mathilda's bedroom. Be assured I didn't tarry long before I turned on the lights, for I couldn't bear those glassy eyes of that big black cat staring at me through the dark.

"Tap—tap—tap-tap" went my stick—then suddenly the blood froze in my veins.

Over my shoulder, coming clearly through the silences of that wide room, I heard the purr-purr-purr of a cat.

I'm a matter-of-fact person, but the presence of a cat in that chamber, with me alone in the house, sent a feeling through me that was most unpleasant. Where was the brute? I looked about me but could see no cat.

The sudden shock had sent the blood pounding in my ears. I stood stock still, waiting. Then it came again—the low, heavy purring of a cat.

Over there, in the corner by the window, I told myself. Cautiously I walked over. The sound of my own footfalls on the bare boards heightened the nervous tension. But the corner was bare of furniture, and no cat did I find. Yet the purr-purr-purr kept up.

BY this time I was moving very cautiously, my nerves taut. There, under the bed it surely was. But when I reached the bed and knelt to look beneath, no cat did I find. And still—louder now—I heard the purring of a cat.

Under the chair—in the clothes closet—under the desk—around and under every article of furniture in that room I looked, and no sign of a cat did I see.

I straightened to my full height, straining to get a grip on myself. For half a minute I listened—listened to the purring, the purring that still went on. There, it came from across the room right over——

Tobias!

That purring came from nowhere else but the pedestal that stood beside Aunt Mathilda's bed!

With a prickly feeling running up and down my spine I looked straight into those staring green eyes. And as I looked, they seemed to smile.

God! was the thing human? I almost imagined I heard the beast laugh.

Then as I stood there in the dead silence the low purring started again. There was no mistaking it. That purring came from dead Tobias!

Without waiting to investigate further I made my way out of the room, trying to convince myself that it was not necessary for me to be assured in any more convincing manner that I was right. If it was Tobias who was purring, let him purr on, I said to myself. I preferred the fresh air.

I was tired and—shaken. Either I was having a dream or else I had seen a dead cat smile and heard it purr. I was looking for a hotel and it didn't take me long to decide on the first one I came to.

My room was a comfortable one overlooking a row of back-yards filled with trees and flower-beds, as I could see by the light of a full moon. Worn out and somewhat disgusted with myself in the nervous tension after the uncanny experience I had had, I soon had my things off and was in bed. But it seemed hours before I finally fell asleep.

Suddenly I woke up. Something, or someone, was in the room. I felt it beyond a doubt. Then as I stared ahead of me there appeared out of the dark a pair of green, glassy eyes—the eyes of that stuffed cat! They were near the fire-escape window and were moving toward me, growing larger every second.

With one bound I was out of bed and had grabbed a chair with which to strike the beast, but I might have saved the effort for it moved slowly in a circle, meanwhile seeming to motion to me with its head to follow. Then as I stood gazing at it spell-bound, it floated, or seemed to float, through the open window, still motioning, out into the moonlight night, and disappeared.

In a moment I had recovered my senses and then I heard myself almost shouting; "I'll find out about that cat!" as I grabbed for my clothes.

I dressed the quickest that time that I ever dressed in my life, for my mind

was made up. I would find that cat and end its career.

ON the way out of the hotel I looked at my watch, and saw that it was three o'clock. At that hour in the morning I knew I couldn't get a taxicab in that small town, so I set out to walk. And I was glad I did, for the brisk pace I set myself tended to give my a clear-thinking head.

As I approached the house, while still a little distance off I paused in alarm, unable to believe my eyes. The second-story front room, the room that had been Aunt Mathilda's for years, was brilliantly lighted. No other light showed in the house. Yet in this all the lights were on, casting a glare over the lawn for yards in front of the house.

Some human agency had turned on those lights. Yet who? I had turned them off as I rushed from the house. But maybe something other than human . . . maybe . . . that cat . . . the ghost of that——

The thought spurred me on. I broke into a trot as I passed the intervening houses, and rushed through Aunt Mathilda's gate at a dead run. I glanced up to get a better look. No living person did I see, and no shadows were cast on the half-drawn blinds.

The downstairs door was closed, but unlocked. I sped past this, and mounted the steps two at a time. I swiftly made the door of Aunt Mathilda's room, threw it wide—then felt my knees sag beneath me, for before me was a sight that made my hair stand on end.

The room was a wreck, everything in the wildest disorder. Mattresses, bedclothes and bed seemed to have been ripped in pieces and the shredded remains thrown in a pile. The dresser drawers were open, clothes strewn about everywhere, chairs over-turned, and there in the general debris I saw Tobias, cast from his pedestal to the floor. The glassy eyes of the big cat seemed to express satisfaction. They were fixed on——

Following the direction of those eyes, I saw a thing that made me stiffen. The body of a woman lay prone on the floor, the head turned downward, one arm stretched over the head as if to ward off a blow.

I rushed over and turned the body over, leaning the head back against a corner of the dresser. But before I recognized who it was I noticed something that sent chills through me. There were two sets of small holes in the woman's neck—such as might be made by a cat's teeth!

The woman was Jessie Dorsey!

"Jessie! Jessie!" I called. "Speak to me!"

She stirred in my arms—opened her eyes slowly.

Apparently there was no recognition at first. She seemed to be seeing me through a haze. Then suddenly she let out an unearthly shriek and struggled frantically to her feet. Waiting for nothing and before I could stop her, she rushed madly from the room, clattered down the stairs and out the front door.

That was the last I saw of her.

It took me some little time to pull myself together. Then I began to wonder about it all. Why had Jessie Dorsey been there at that ungodly hour in the morning?

SUBSEQUENT investigation brought to light the fact that since the funeral she hadn't left the neighborhood, but had stayed within sight of the house, waiting her chance to come in when she felt she was not to be interrupted.

And what was her motive? I found it in that same room of Aunt Mathilda's. Mathilda's papers, filed in her desk—papers I had overlooked when I made my first hurried search of the desk—disclosed a copy of a letter Aunt Mathilda had written Jessie shortly after the quarrel. The letter stated, in effect, just this:

Aunt Mathilda had intended to leave her money, to the amount of sixty thousand dollars, to Jessie and her children. A will had been made out to this effect, and a copy had been given to Jessie. The quarrel that started over Tobias had wiped out the will. The letter stated clearly that Mathilda intended to find another legatee. (Grace, of course, was that new legatee, as Jessie and all of us well knew.)

Logic and reason, then, told me that Jessie had come to the house to find that second will. She, too, knew that Mathilda kept her important papers somewhere in that room, and she went over every inch of the room to try to find them. I saw all this as I stood there looking over that room.

But did Jessie succeed? I had to know——

Within ten minutes I knew that her search had been fruitless, for I found the will, along with the deed for the house, receipts for furniture and other papers, myself. Where? Where I never would have looked—where only the disorder that had reached Tobias forced me to look.

These precious papers were in the bottom of the pedestal on which Tobias had stood, in a hollow compartment that looked from the outside like the solid wood that formed the pedestal's base, but when viewed from below was seen unmistakably as a camouflage.

Tobias is a memory now. I put what was left of the faithful beast into a plush-lined box and buried him under one of Aunt Mathilda's great oak trees.

Grace is happy, for she has studied hard and hopes to make her debut on the concert stage next winter.

Jessie Dorsey? I can give little information about her. She may be dead for all I know. No one in Rigefield ever saw her after that night. The ghost of Black Tobias may have sent the woman insane when it came back to earth that night and fought to keep Mathilda's will from her clutches. Or, was it the ghost of Tobias?

The big cat had an affectionate heart. It loved Mathilda—no doubt about that.

The ghost part of it must remain a mystery. I only set down here what I saw. I do not pretend to explain it.

In the Clutches of the Black Idol

(*Continued from page* 51)

which I am afraid!"

The shudder passed through me again. His voice had sunk to a whisper, and a strange light was in his eyes. I knew that he had looked upon things that he would never reveal. Azzim came in with the coffee.

I arose, grateful for the interruption, and walked to a far side of the room where stood a taboret on which rested a dark figure. It had attracted my attention, possibly because it alone, of all the objects in the room, had been honored with a place of solitary dignity, and for some reason the wall about it had been left bare, save for a plain dark hanging behind it. Just as I was about to reach out for it, I heard a sharp cry behind me, and the Major grasped my arm so suddenly, so strongly, that he not only startled me, but hurt me terribly.

"Don't! Miss Darrell! Keep your hands off the black idol!"

There was a gasp in Major Bassett's voice and his customary gallantry had quite deserted him. There was a look of utter terror in his eyes. Azzim was glaring at me in savage fury. Major Bassett tried to make his tone seem casual.

"Come away, please, Miss Darrell! That—that image is rather a pet of mine; I'm always worried that something'll happen to it."

He laughed nervously, but I could see that his fingers were working convulsively. Some contrary devil led me to go on.

"Let me take just a peek! I'll be very careful," I said.

But there was no mistaking the look in the Major's eye as he answered. "I'm afraid I'll have to refuse; it's the only thing in the room, Miss Darrell——" his words faltered as if he were at a loss what to say.

I was interested, and a little frightened at his evident terror.

"That idol is the thing you fear!" I whispered to him as I returned to my seat, and I saw him draw up tense. It had been a most unpleasant moment for him.

The conversation went on dully after that, and my eyes kept returning to the ugly black image. What could it signify to move the stalwart Major so strongly? It seemed from a distance to be carved out of black stone, or it had grown black with age. There was a god squatted on a pedestal, a thick, ungainly figure, with an ugly face. The idol could not have been more than eighteen inches high; yet the pedestal was of unusual solidity. I kept looking

at it continually, but my curiosity was bound to remain unsatisfied. Major Bassett said no further word about it.

Somewhere in the wee small hours Billy Dane's head began to nod and I rose to go. For my own part I would still have lingered, for the Major had proved an extraordinary host. He seemed appreciative of my interest, for he had found an eager listener.

"You ought to have something to remember this experience by, Miss Darrell," he said. "Some memento of your visit. Won't you pick something out?"

I searched his eyes to see if the offer had been made in earnest, but he had no idea of what was in my mind. He smiled and waved his hand at the room. "Anything you like," he said again.

I took a step toward the idol. "I'll have that, Major Bassett," I said quietly.

An expression of horror swept the Major's face. "Miss Darrell! No! You must choose again!" he cried.

But again the demons that lurk in one's soul lured me on. "Is it so precious?" My words were a taunt.

He stifled the anger that must have risen within him at that, and for a moment he was unable to speak. I turned scornfully to Billy Dane. "Come along, Billy; we're terribly late!"

But Major Bassett caught my arm; his voice was trembling.

"You have my word you shall take what you want, Miss Darrell; the word of a British officer. I shall keep it. But please, I beg of you, don't ask for that! Please!"

So earnest, impassioned even, was his tone that I turned to him curiously. I might even then have taken warning. But Azzim had come now, silent and ominous, with our wraps and I was impatient.

"Superstition again?" I asked mockingly. "I would like to cure you of your superstitions, Major!"

"Call it that!" he said somberly. "I don't know any longer what is superstition and what is reason. But I know a dark fate hangs over that idol, Miss Darrell; a dangerous fate for you, and others. I beg of you not to risk it."

I LAUGHED outright at his fantastic words. It was really too melodramatic. Major Bassett hesitated a moment; then gave a sharp command to Azzim, who left the room reluctantly, it seemed to me. The Major spoke in a low tone.

"A while ago you said that idol was the thing I feared, Miss Darrell. Well, it's true. It may be superstition—call it coincidence or what you will—but it is a thing of evil. Please don't tempt it. It comes from the hill tribes of the mountains of Borneo; it's a god and a power up there." He paused to scrutinize the hideous thing.

"It's a man's god, Miss Darrell; it bodes ill to women. A man who lets a woman defile it will be struck down, and the woman herself will pay the penalty. And it must never be taken by force or stealth; he who comes by it that way will surely suffer. I know for myself that these things are true."

"True?" Annoyance and contempt were in my voice. "It's ridiculous even to repeat such fables—so childish!"

Major Bassett drew a deep breath. "You insist?"

"Of course not, Major Bassett! But there's nothing else I'd really care to have."

What monster of perversity caused me to speak like that? Was it merely the thwarting of an idle whim of mine, the weakness of a woman who had been denied her toy? At the time I was conscious only of a feeling of oppression brought on by the hours I had spent looking at these queer figures and listening to their impossible histories. More than once I had shuddered and had found myself regarding them with horror. Now I wanted to prove to myself that there was nothing to fear; that it was nothing but a child's tale that had been very vividly and realistically told.

Major Bassett walked quickly across the room and picked up the idol carefully. It must have cost him an effort, for when he brought it to me his face was very grave.

"Be careful of it, Miss Darrell," he said steadily. "See that it is always erect; it is only when it falls that it can work mischief. That's why the pedestal is made unusually heavy."

HE placed it reverently in my hands and I held it gingerly a moment. Now that I actually had it in my possession, a feeling of revulsion passed through me. It was a hideous object, and I shivered slightly as I looked. Besides, I began to realize how I had acted. I had been silly and rude to insist. Billy Dane looked on with growing concern.

"Don't take it, Vee!" he exclaimed. "The thing looks like the very devil! Put it down!"

All my obstinacy came back at that. "We're trying to outgrow the age of devils, you know, Billy," I said acidly. "And we're not going to be frightened by fairy tales, Major Bassett. I'll take good care of your idol, and teach him that women are on an equality with men nowadays!"

I laughed to myself as Billy headed the car in the direction of my bungalow; it was absurd how agitated the Major had been. That a man who had worn the British uniform for years should be so disturbed by a heathen myth seemed unbelievable. Yet as I rode home I took care that the idol should remain firmly erect on my lap; at every lurch of the machine I clutched it to be sure it did not fall. Had the idle superstition taken hold of me? I could have sworn that I was proof against such folly.

But once inside my own door I was glad when I had set down the wretched demon. Marie, my maid, had been asleep for hours, and as I threw off my things I became aware of an uncomfortable sensation stealing over me. It was as if the demon were alive, and was watching me. I examined it more closely now. It was made of some shiny stone of incredible hardness; something volcanic, probably from the island where the Major had picked it up.

The eyes seemed to be half closed, and the expression pensive.

Yet as I set it down on the table near the window, it seemed as though it was watching me beneath those drooping lids. I opened the window and thought I saw a shadow move among the poinsettas in the garden. I stood there for a while, but nothing stirred except the huge overhanging leaves. My nerves were jumpy, and I went to bed to seek the security of sleep.

IT must have been an hour later that I opened my eyes with a start. Every nerve was alive and tingling with a foreboding of imminent danger, and for a moment I lay there scarcely daring to breathe. I knew that I was being watched by someone—or something. I am not a coward; yet at that unseen, unknown threat my limbs seemed paralyzed, and my breath was coming in gasps.

Then I saw it suddenly at the open window, saw it, and almost died of stark fear. A hand was stretching through the window — a hand and then an arm; and as I looked on throttled by a horrible fear, I saw talons of fingers reach into the room. The hand and arm were brown, and the fingers horny; and in the peculiar light they seemed to be moving in a void, as if without attachment to a body. Then the fingers suddenly descended on the idol, and in that moment my voice came to me. Frantic, I flung myself from bed with a shriek.

The fingers gave a spasmodic quiver, and the idol fell with a crash to the floor. I reached for the revolver under my pillow, and as I turned again to the window I saw a dark figure, wild and contorted, trying to clamber in. I fired, but the bullet went wild. The intruder gave a yelp, and slipping from the sill turned and fled. As his face was illuminated for a moment I recognized the native servant of Major Bassett. In an instant he had disappeared among the palms and poinsettas.

I switched on the light, and Marie came bursting into my room, awakened by the shot and by my cries, and for some minutes I must have been hysterical. Then when I grew calm, I remembered what had happened. On the floor lay the idol, face down where it had fallen. An indescribable feeling of horror came over me, different far from the fright that had seized me when first I caught sight of the arm at my window. What had been the words of Major Bassett?

"Keep it always erect, Miss Darrell; if it falls something deadly will happen!"

I could hear it just as plainly as if he himself were talking. Could he really have been in earnest? Was there something about this bit of stone that held a real and terrible menace? I almost sickened as I approached the table. How I wished that I had never set eyes upon it! It was all I could do to touch it, for there was in me a newly awakened fear of things I could not understand.

I set the thing erect again, and to my nerveless fingers it seemed as if the stone was exuding a dampness. It may have been the perspiration from my own hands, for I was ill and feverish. The electrics were dim, and in the low light

the monster on the table seemed to have changed in color from black to sickly green. My eyes were playing me tricks, I thought, and I asked Marie to bring in a cot and sleep near me. Then when I had closed and locked the windows, I returned to bed.

How I ever fell asleep I do not know, for strange and sinister thoughts assailed me, and when I finally passed into a troubled slumber, fantastic figures peopled my dreams with endless horror. It was long past noon when Marie awoke me, and I did not feel like rising then, for sleep had brought me no rest. I was as exhausted as if I had never touched a pillow. But I had made an engagement which I could not put off, and I went through a weary toilette.

While Marie did my hair and made voluble comment on the night's events, I stared with growing repugnance at Major Bassett's gift. The idol, it seemed to me, had a faculty for changing its expression. When I had looked at it for the first time, it had worn a solemn and dour look, evil enough in its ugliness, but quiet and somnolent, as if it were asleep.

Now the idol had awakened. The eyes, which the night before I would have sworn were heavily lidded and downcast, seemed to be thin slits now; the jaws which had been sunken in repose, were now fixed in a baleful leer. The idol looked alert and watchful, like an animal that scents its prey.

IN the light of day these thoughts seemed folly, but somehow I could not rid myself of the notions. I determined to send the idol back to Major Bassett that very day. Was it really Azzim who had tried to break into my room during the night? I felt sure I could not be mistaken; I had seen that ill visaged face all too plainly.

And then I bethought myself of what the Major had said about the servant. He was from the hill tribes of Borneo, and the idol too had come from there. Must there not be some connection between the two? That graven image probably was Azzim's god; he had come to rescue him from alien hands. At any rate, I would take no further chance of having him visit me again.

I had pushed away my breakfast things almost untouched when the telephone in the next room rang. Marie answered it and called to me.

"It's Mrs. Ogden; shall I say you're in?"

I felt that the sound of a human voice would do me good, and I went languidly to the phone. But something in Ann's voice sent the blood from my face and shot a chill through my very bones.

"Have you heard, Vee?" she asked. "Do you know?"

My heart was in my mouth. "What is it, Ann?"

"Major Bassett! He's dead!" she answered. "He was killed, Vee, some time last night!"

I held on to the receiver with fingers that were icy cold. I could only utter a groan. I heard her next words in a daze.

"They found his body down the road a few miles from his bungalow," Ann said. "He'd been thrown from his horse, they think; instantly killed, the doctors said. The animal must have shied at something; it was standing beside the body when a motorist discovered it this morning."

"When—when did it happen?" I found voice to ask.

"No one knows exactly. His man has been questioned, and it seems the Major went out right after you and Billy Dane left. According to the servant he didn't go to bed at all. Midnight riding was an old habit of his. It's funny the way things turn out."

Funny? Funny, indeed! I bowed my head over the table and tried to blot from my eyes the taut, eager countenance of Major Bassett. My head was splitting, but through the tumult in my brain I could hear his voice as it had sounded low and grave.

"Don't ask for it, Miss Darrell! . . . A dangerous fate for you and others . . . I beg you not to risk it!" He had pleaded with me, a strange light rising in those eyes that were not given to fear.

I had taunted him, and had insisted. And an hour or two later he was dead. Was it mere coincidence? One of those queer pranks of fate that make chance and destiny the same? I only know that during the morning the idol on my table had fallen—and Major Bassett had met his end. Something in my heart told me I was to blame.

I CALLED up Billy Dane, but he was already on his way to see me. It gave me courage; I needed someone to strengthen my shaken spirits; someone whose cool phlegmatic mind would brush aside the necromancy in which I was engulfed. I was dressed when he arrived, and we sat together as I told him of Azzim's visit in the night. Billy's expression took on a sudden interest.

"That's important, Vee!" he exclaimed; "the authorities ought to know about that. You see they questioned Azzim closely, but he said nothing about having been gone during the night. This thing looks suspicious. They're going to hold an autopsy, and I think they ought to give Azzim another grilling. He may know——"

But I protested strongly. I was in no condition to answer questions, and finally Billy agreed to say nothing. But he glowered as his eye fell on the monstrosity on my table.

"Get rid of it, by all means, Vee!" he said. "There's no use running any danger for a thing like that. And you mustn't let it worry you; it's nonsense to think it had anything to do with the—accident to Major Bassett. Why, there's no more power in this ugly little beast than in any other hunk of stone!"

He picked up the idol as if to dash it to the floor.

"Billy!" I tried to stop him but my warning came too late.

A shadow slipped by my side, an upraised arm and hand, holding something glistening, flashed and descended, and as the idol crashed to the floor Billy Dane staggered back with a groan and fell. A black figure stood before me uttering words that sounded like gibberish to my

numbed brain. It was Major Bassett's servant. Snatching up the idol he sprang through the window and swiftly disappeared.

My voice as I called to Marie for aid was broken, gasping. Staggering under the burden we helped Billy to the bed. He seemed more dazed than hurt, although blood was pouring from a wound in his shoulder. We had a doctor in a few minutes, and he found that the wound, though painful, was not dangerous. Azzim had been too excited and hurried to give a deathblow, if that indeed had been his intention. He had evidently sneaked in through the front door unobserved by Marie, and slipped down the hall. I myself was not aware that he was in the room until he had dashed past me as Billy Dane seized the idol. That act may have saved both our lives, for the sacrilege to his god seemed to have unnerved the Oriental.

But developments during the afternoon gave a more sinister significance to the actions of the fanatic Azzim. A search of Major Bassett's house had revealed a note, or perhaps a part of a diary, which had been turned over to the authorities.

"Azzim has found out that his god is gone," read the statement, which must have been penned very shortly after Billy Dane and I had left. "He is frantic, and has rushed out of the house in a frenzy. I am afraid he knew I gave it to Miss Darrell; but I do not fear for her safety. His anger is for me and I must take precautions."

And—the autopsy later in the day disclosed that Major Bassett had not been thrown from his horse, but had been murdered, and the body taken out to the desolate roadside in the dead of night and left there with his horse. A further search of the house, made in earnest now by the police, resulted in the finding of a knotted war club, stained with blood, that had been the weapon; and also revealed that Azzim had disappeared with many of the Major's treasures.

A SEARCH was instituted at once, but neither Azzim nor the black idol were ever heard of again. The earth seemed to have swallowed them up.

Love—and the Last Frontier

(*Continued from page* 41)

I was looking through the two volumes of Emily's diary and had come to a page marked by a large ink-stain about the size of a twenty-five cent piece. It was at the end of an entry in which she had made a passing reference to spiritualism.

This blot fascinated me for some reason. I stared moodily at it, my mind free of any definite thoughts. Suddenly the blot appeared to become semi-transparent, to acquire depth, as if it had been a dark pool. Then——

The face of a man materialized clearly—the face of my brother Owen!

An instant—and it had disappeared.

I HAVE refrained from mentioning Owen Purcell before, for two good reasons. He had never known Emily, and he may be said to have been brought back into my own life by the incident just described.

Owen is a singular character. He is fifteen years older than I, an analytical chemist by profession and a recluse by choice. He lives by himself in a top-floor apartment on Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, overlooking the harbor. He occasionally visits our parents, but cannot be induced to come if there are to be strangers present. The reserve of his manner is impenetrable.

In these circumstances—believing that he regarded me as a negligible youngster—I was astounded that his apparition should have appeared to me. I had no notion of what it could mean. Yet I connected it with Emily, since her diary had been the starting point.

I went to see Owen, of course. He received me in his dimly-lit, book-lined study, raising his brows quizzically, as if to say that he did not take much brotherly pleasure in my visit.

I began in a matter of fact tone to tell him about the ink-stain, but almost at once my emotion overcame me and I brokenly told him the whole story of my grief over Emily, my efforts to communicate with her at séances, and the rest of it.

Owen rose and walked up and down the room, with a touch of excitement that was unlike him. "You've been playing with serious stuff—just playing with it!" he said sharply.

I stared back at him. "Do you mean that you know more about the subject than I do?"

"Exactly. I've never mentioned it to you. I'm not in the habit of chattering about such things."

Owen, I may say in passing, is one of the most accomplished occultists of our times, but I got my first inkling of the fact right then.

"The 'controls' that talk at an ordinary table-tipping party are usually a low-grade lot," he went on. "They were morons, or idiots, or criminals, when in the flesh. Sometimes the spirit of some very simple person will come through and give an intelligent message. But the superior souls are on a plane removed from easy contact with the earth. Their very superiority has taken them farther out of our reach."

"And Emily?" I asked faintly.

"She has never spoken to you. A crude, mischievous spirit has impersonated her to you. Yet she has been aware of what has been going on and has striven to direct you telepathically. Your seeing my face in the ink-stain proves that."

"Why—what is the connection?" I stammered, a chill running up and down my spine.

"YOUR concentration on the ink-stain was like crystal gazing. Then she conjured up my face, to send you to me, to make you tell me your story, to bring me into the affair as a medium."

"Are you strong enough, Owen, to bridge the gap between me and Emily, in death?"

"It's possible, in view of the circumstances. But remember, this sort of plunge into the unknown is nothing more nor less than magic. We may get what we want, or we may be attacked by the forces of evil. It's a gamble."

I had too much at stake to allow his ominous words to frighten me, so he went about his preparations swiftly and silently. Instead of the little tabouret I was accustomed to using, he cleared a heavy library table on either side of which we were to sit in straight-backed chairs.

Owen seemed to be no longer conscious of my presence. He took from his desk a little crystal globe, held it cupped in both palms and gazed into it for perhaps fifteen minutes. He afterwards told me that he saw nothing in the globe, but his eyes grew dreamy and the lines in his face softened. He finally laid the globe aside and seating himself at the table, placed his finger tips on it, and directed me to do likewise.

The resulting phenomena were far more sophisticated, if I may use the term, than anything I had yet known. The table neither tipped, nor tapped on the floor. But it began to quiver all over, and presently there came a series of clear raps at the very heart of the wood, as if it had been struck from below by an unseen knuckle. I got the absolute feeling that there was a *presence* in the room.

Owen listened attentively to the rapping until it ceased, then closed his eyes and sunk down in his chair, his head inclined loosely forward, his hands still trailing on the table. I could tell that he was in a hypnotic state.

He commenced to mutter in a voice that was not his. The tone lightened and became feminine. He raised his head, seemingly with a great effort, then——

I found myself listening to the voice of Emily Greenway,—her words sounding clearly from my brother's lips!

It was both the most weird and the most beautiful experience of my life. I felt neither terror nor doubt. I accepted it as a fact that Emily was conversing with me through the powerful mediumship of Owen, and I still believe that such was the case. In recording what was said, it will be simpler to quote her directly and forget the medium.

"Good evening, Hugh," she said. "I can see you quite plainly, dear; but you must not expect to see me. Materializations of the departed call for an unnatural effort, and are equally bad for the spirit and the living person."

"All right, Emily," I answered, as

calmly as she had spoken. "Do we have much time for this talk?"

"Only a few minutes," came the voice of the dead girl. "If I used your brother's body too long, it would kill him. Now listen—— You are looking very thin, and nerve-racked. You are not taking proper care of your health. I want you to return to a normal way of living."

"What must I do?"

"You must cease fretting about me, cease taking a morbid view of our love. The moment your mortal flesh dies, we shall be reunited. That is because we really loved each other, and still love. The great secret of immortality is, that only those who loved on earth—in friendship, or a closer bond—are allowed to come together on this side."

"So the perfect happiness of the hereafter is the elimination of hatred?"

"Yes. But pay attention to my special message to you. Your present existence must be lived fully and normally, or you will be punished later by a cycle of probation on a lower plane of immortality than mine. You must not make of my memory a corpse around your neck. You must marry."

I GASPED. "But, Emily, if only those who love are to be joined after death, I'd not want to replace you with a newer love, with a wife."

"There is no jealousy on this side," the dead girl went on. "There is no competition in love. The conditions are spiritual. I cannot explain them to you, but you must believe that what I tell you is the truth. You will be reunited in harmony with all those you have loved on earth."

"Do you know whom it is I should marry?"

"More than that. Our talk has fixed your destiny by preparing your mind for it. I know whom it is you *will* marry."

"Will you give me her name?"

"No, Hugh. It would lessen the beauty of your courtship to be too certain."

"Shall I ever know positively that she was the woman you are thinking about now?"

"Yes. I promise you——" Her voice faltered. "The diary will prove it to you — some day — my diary . . . watch out for it, for it will give you——"

My brother, Owen, sighed deeply and opened his eyes. The séance was ended.

A marvelous tranquility possessed me. I scarcely needed Owen's cool, impersonal judgment to strengthen my conviction.

"The spirit of Emily Greenway was undoubtedly in this room, and you talked with her," he said, when I told him what had happened. "We were successful because evil influences kept away from us. But it's dangerous stuff. Don't ask me to repeat it."

I felt no need for another such conversation. All essential questions had been answered for me. Let the reader compare the straight-forward, human sanity of the final séance with the rigmarole produced at my first table-tipping stunt, and he will understand the basis of my confidence. There is no reason why a person who had been intelligent on earth should not talk good sense from beyond the grave. A babbling, foolish message should always be doubted. A rational one, of the kind Owen's powerful mediumship was able to give me, may well be accepted as genuine.

IMMEDIATELY after the events recounted, I resumed my ordinary social life and likely enough I created the impression that I had forgotten Emily. I sought the company of girls, played tennis and danced with them, and flirted with those who appealed to me. More than once, I wondered whether some young, vivacious product of the jazz age might not prove to be my predestined sweetheart and wife. But, as happens to most of us, I cooled off as easily and harmlessly as I had become interested. Two or three "crushes" of the kind a year were none too many.

I met Roberta Collins at a beach party. She was a tiny black-haired, blue-eyed thing who, strange to say, did not stir my imagination at first. Even when she told me that she had known Emily Greenway as a child, I did not feel drawn to her. I merely felt a stab of the old pain at the mention of Emily's name.

Nevertheless, I fell into the way of seeing a great deal of Roberta. I liked her better and better without realizing what was taking place. Then came an evening when I suddenly found my arms about her and my lips on hers. We needed neither the poets nor the philosophers to tell us that we were in love.

I became engaged to Roberta, but I was tormented by a doubt as to whether she really was the girl Emily had intended for me. Recalling what the latter had said about her diary, I went through the two volumes again in the hope of discovering a hint. But I had read them a hundred times already, and I found nothing new.

The missing volume grew to be an overwhelming need. I called at the Greenway home and begged to be allowed to make an exhaustive search for it. The result will take only a few words to tell. It was so logical and direct that I cannot ascribe it to coincidence.

As the reader will remember, that middle volume had not been located at the time of Emily's death. Many unsuccessful hunts had since been made for it. Yet I had not been at work five minutes before I unearthed it from the bottom of a trunk stuffed with papers in the attic. I stared at it, moved by a profound intuitional surety that it contained the ultimate key to my adventure. Then I opened the book haphazzard, and the first entry on which my eyes fell contained the name of Roberta Collins.

"This afternoon, I ran into an old playmate—Roberta Collins," Emily had written. "She looks quite grown up, a sweet, dear girl, and very pretty."

That was all, but it was enough. Call it the supernatural or what you will, I believed that Emily had fulfilled her last promise. When the time was ripe, she had guided me to the page on which, years before, she had written the name of the woman I was to marry.

AND Roberta agrees with me. There is no smallness or jealousy in her nature. We both feel that our earthly love has been made more beautiful by its contact with that other love—Emily's and mine—which still flowers beyond the last frontier of life here on this earth.

True it is that the border of the Great Beyond, the passing of which we call Death, may be the last frontier of earthly life as we know it, but love passes beyond that.

To love there is no barrier—for faith comes from love, and it is said that faith can move mountains.

The Phantom Ace

(*Continued from page 20*)

has keys to it—just remember that."

I nodded.

"Nothing out of the ordinary happened until last Saturday night. However, in recent months I have been considerably worried because of a certain matter. It caused me to cut short my stay in Europe. That night I felt particularly drab. Frankly, I drank more than I usually do, trying to give my spirits a boost. But I was not intoxicated, understand. My wits were clear, even though my legs may have been a bit unsteady. But the liquor brought no relief from my worries.

"Finally, pleading that I had some work to do in the library, I brought our game to an end. The others retired. I went outside and walked about the lawn, smoking and trying to do some thinking. I was out much longer than I realized. I was recalled to myself by the ringing of two o'clock on the church bell down in the village. Glancing toward the house, I noted there were no lights other than those I had left.

"Although I had not solved my problem, I decided to go to bed. But, as I wheeled and headed toward the front door, I was brought to a stop by the whir of a motor which quickly increased to a roar. Then, out of the darkness came a plane, flying low. It passed directly over my head, then went almost straight up and showing plainly in the full moonlight."

"Did you note the pilot?"

"Not then: Probably I was too surprised to observe closely. It seemed

amazing that I should have been so occupied with my thoughts that I had not heard the machine's approach. Then came another and more startling thought. The plane might be my own. Some one might have broken into the hangar and stolen it.

"FOR a moment I was tempted to rush away and ascertain the truth of that surmise. But the machine, still visible and rumbling directly above, held me. I would not leave until I noted in which direction it made off. Minutes passed. The machine remained within sight, moving mostly in wide circles, now and then looping with one wing down. Then I noted it was becoming larger and the circles were becoming smaller. It was coming down. And its pilot intended to make a landing not far from me.

"I was so transfixed with amazement that I could not move. Nearer and nearer came the machine. Then it swung into a great circle, touched the earth on the far edge of the lawn, out near the river, bumped and bobbed toward me, and came to a stop, within thirty feet of where I stood.

"I watched, fascinated. The phantom pilot had swung free of the cockpit and stood with his back toward me. In wonder I noted that he wore the uniform of an army flyer. But he wore no helmet. His head was bare.

"Then he turned and faced me.

"Aden—for the first time in my life, I think, my nerves gave way. Something seemed to snap in my brain. For, as certain as we are here, the pilot who faced me was Chester Reynolds—just as we saw him last, understand. No older. And his face was wearing that damnable tense, beaten expression we had learned to know so well—and hate—after he came back from Paris . . . after Sonya——"

"You mean you saw him plainly? Do you mean that his body appeared to be one of substance?"

"I saw him plainly, but his body was different than yours or mine. He was vapor. Almost immediately after I glimpsed him, his outline began to fade, as though he were backing into a fog. Soon he had disappeared entirely. I recovered both my wits and my nerve quickly. In a few bounds I was beside the plane. It was mine!

"I reached over and touched the engine. It was hot. Then I raced to the hangar. And again I received a jolt which forced the cold sweat out all over me. The doors were closed and the locks were in place and fastened.

"For the time being I managed to force from my mind speculation concerning what I had seen. My chief anxiety was to keep knowledge of the apparition and the removal of my plane from its hangar from my guests and the servants. I was determined to prevent gossip if possible. And, without awakening anyone, I reached my room, changed to my flying outfit and returned to the plane, where I waited until daylight. Then I summoned the stable hands and had them put the machine where it belonged. And to all queries I replied that, being restless and unable to sleep, I had gone out for a bit of night flying."

"But, when you had opportunity to reason, what did you think? Why should Chester's phantom seek you out rather than Ritchie or myself? And is there not some outstanding reason why it came to *The Maples* and at this particular time?"

"IN a few moments I'll tell you of my final conclusion. But first I must go on with my story and tell what occurred before Chester's second appearance. In the hours of waiting for dawn, after I had seen him the first time. I was half mad trying to master my thoughts. Never before had I encountered anything which had caused me the slightest doubt that those who died were forever removed from the earth's sphere. I could scarcely credit what my eyes had seen. And, but for the presence of the plane on the lawn and the locked hangar, I probably would have argued myself into believing that my experience had been only the hallucination of an alcoholic brain.

"Once the machine was rolled away, I decided to bring ease to my throbbing brain and nerve-racked body. I drugged myself into a long sleep. When I arose I was again able to think clearly. But, while still striving to fix upon a plausible reason for the appearance of Chester's phantom, I did a thing which I hoped would give me a supporting witness in the event that it returned. This was to have Courtney, armed, sleep in the hangar each night. Explaining that I had been warned that some one would make an attempt to steal the plane, I ordered him to shoot anyone who broke into the place. As an extra precaution I had additional locks placed upon the inside of the doors which no one but Courtney could open after he retired.

"Then, for a week—nothing happened. Courtney's daily report was that he had enjoyed uninterrupted sleep each night. Of course, as time went on, the terror of the adventure of that mad night became a bit dulled and I managed to get a pretty fair grip on my nerves again.

"But day and night I puzzled over it. The fact that my plane had been taken from the hangar was proof positive that my wits had not played me tricks. And, as certain as you and I are sitting here, the phantom which I saw was that of Chester Reynolds. I didn't take a drink all week—not one. I wanted to have an absolutely clear brain to study the mystery and try to determine its significance. I suspected a reason, but was not certain. You can judge how the matter gripped me when I tell you that those about the house noted my abstraction. And, from good natured jesting, they soon passed to accusing me of having fallen in love and begged me to divulge my secret."

"And then?"

"NOW I come to last night. We had been out to the polo field in the afternoon—came back a bit fagged. But dinner restored us to full vigor. The night being perfect, we had all the porch lights switched on and, after cigarettes and coffee, began a bridge session.

"I played poorly. My mind would keep reverting to Chester. I could not center my mind upon the cards. By and by, I began to realize that my nerves, for no particular reason, were beginning to tingle. I again was the victim of an inexplicable uneasiness—as on the night a week before, when Chester appeared.

"Finally my game became positively wretched. I was in mortal fear that the phantom was about to return, that it might appear at any moment—before all of us.

"My play became so poor, the jibes of the others so rasped upon my racked nerves, that I stated I was suffering with a terrific headache which was getting worse. That invention, as I had anticipated, terminated the game. And, knowing they soon would follow, I made my excuses and went to my room.

"But I did not retire. Instead I took a post near my door, which I left ajar, and waited. Finally I heard my guests saying their good-nights and scatter to their rooms. Immediately I donned a dark sweater, which completely covered my shirt and collar, slipped down here and out upon the veranda, keeping close in the shadows. When I noted the last lights extinguished, I made my way along the shrubbery to a summer-house overlooking the lawn. By that time my temples were pounding and I drove my nails into my palms in an effort to hold mastery over my quivering body. I don't know how I knew, but I was positive that Chester was going to appear again—that night.

"My wait was long—at least two hours. And you'll appreciate I was in an agony of fear and expectancy throughout the time. But my vigil, which seemed endless, was terminated as I had anticipated. Suddenly, as before, the rumble of a motor reached me, steadily increasing to a roar. Then a plane swept across the green, left the earth in a graceful swoop and shot toward the clouds.

"I don't know how long it was up. Probably only a few minutes—circling, diving and looping. Then, as on the previous occasion, it returned as though guided by a master hand, came to a perfect stop and—the phantom of Chester climbed from it, took a few steps toward me, then disappeared, with the quickness of a light being snapped off.

"I PULLED myself together more quickly this time and ran to the plane. It was mine, of course. Without sound, I raced to the hangar. It was locked. I roused Courtney. He opened the doors when he heard my voice. Entering, I switched on the lights. His look when he noted the plane had disappeared through the doors which he had locked from the inside was that of a man who feared suddenly he was going mad.

I told him where the machine was. That I had heard its motor and found it when I came out to investigate. I explained no further. But it required an hour of my utmost persuasion before he promised to remain at *The Maples* and, more important—to keep it a secret. Exactly what he thought, he did not state. However, from his words, I knew he had guessed more than half the truth, that phantom hands had removed the

plane while he lay there, sound asleep.

"Of course he positively refused to remain in the hangar. He has not even been near it since. The following day I repeated my story that I had done a little night flying. And, after the plane had been wheeled back into its quarters, I had the doors covered with heavy planks which were screwed into place. My excuse to the workmen was that I was expecting a sudden summons to return to the city and wished to leave it secure from possible thieves. That's the story, Aden. I sent for you to——"

"Because you believe Chester will return, that he again will take the plane from the hangar, that unless something he desires is done, others will see——"

"Yes, Aden—yes. And I am helpless. But you—you should be able to learn his wishes. Perhaps he will speak to you. In heaven's name, what do you think?"

"Whether he will speak to me or not is something which only the future will determine. As to what I think—I think what I suspect you do—that among your guests, whose names you have so deliberately kept from me, is one whose presence is responsible for the appearance of our old friend's phantom. Now, who are they?"

"Ritchie and his wife——"

"Ted and Edythe! I thought they were in Europe."

"They were. But I brought them back with me—persuaded them to cut short their trip."

There was something in his tone which gave me an unpleasant feeling. Was it Ted who was responsible for Chester's appearance? They had been the closest of buddies. Had Ted done something amiss? Then, with a suddenness which fairly made me gasp, came another thought. "See here, Tom. Your third guest isn't——"

"You are right," replied Hewitt quietly. "Sonya Reynolds is here."

"Well I'm——. But still I can't grasp the situation clearly. Why didn't Chester appear to her rather than to you?" I paused. Maybe I was beginning to sense the truth. The suspicion was one which turned me cold. "It can't be that she—and Ted——"

"I'll explain everything, Aden. I held this back so as not to prejudice your conclusion concerning Chester's visits before I had explained about them. You and I know Edythe is one of the finest girls in the world, though perhaps a bit too matter-of-fact; lacking just a trifle in vivacity. However, we thought she was an ideal mate for Ted, for he never had played about, as you and I. And, for three years, as you know, their married life appeared ideal.

"Last winter they went to Europe, as usual. I met them in Switzerland. We had a jolly time until——. Well, by some damnable freak of fate, Sonya came to Interlaken, where we were stopping. I'll skip details. The woman was more beautiful than ever; outwardly hadn't aged a day. And she was more alluring, enticing. Almost immediately she began to play with Ted. I don't know what came over the boy. He just lost his head, entirely. From a flirtation their conduct became an affair.

"EDYTHE was frantic. I think Ted all but broke her heart. But she loved him and tried to hold him. And, hang it all, she just couldn't. In a battle of wits against a woman of the world like Sonya, she was too badly handicapped. Finally I went after him, hammer and tongs. He listened to me, grudgingly. But he and Edythe went with me to Paris. Sonya followed. The affair of Switzerland was repeated, only more so. Again I argued with him. I think I got under his skin, made him realize his folly. He appeared to try to get a new grip on himself. Anyway, he finally agreed that he and Edythe would leave for America with me, without Sonya being informed of our intention. That they would spend the summer here with me at *The Maples*.

"I attended to everything, purchasing the tickets, shipping the baggage and all the rest. I even arranged that we travel under assumed names. And, at the time, I fancied we had taken such precautions that Sonya would not learn of our destination—at least for a time. But the devil himself couldn't outwit that woman. She must have uncovered our scheme almost immediately. Probably she took the steamer immediately following ours.

"For, ten days after we reached here, she appeared, bag and baggage, to take advantage of a merely polite invitation I had given her in Switzerland to visit me some time. I never really intended that invitation. And it was given before she and Ted began their outrageous flirtation. Now you know everything and can guess the conclusion I have reached why Chester has come here."

"You're right, Tom," I said, without hesitancy. "He has come to thwart Sonya, to make you the instrument of his wishes. I'm glad you sent for me. I'll help with everything I possess. But I want to think—and very hard—before I suggest a plan. I'm in hope we will be able to do something before he comes again."

"You think he will come?"

"I'm certain of it—unless we can get Sonya away and save Ted. If we fail and he does come—Good God, man, I hate to think what may happen! It is not given for the human mind to forecast in such circumstances. But no more tonight. I'm going to my room, to think. I'll see you all at breakfast. Wait. One thing more. I'll come down late. Don't tell anyone I'm here. I want to note how Sonya and Ted take my unexpected appearance."

FOR hours I lay awake, planning. But I fell asleep without having arrived at any definite scheme of action. Tom awakened me. And a cold shower pulled me into condition for what I was certain would prove to be a trying day.

I lingered in my room until after I had heard the others descend. The lively conversation being carried on in the breakfast room ceased with a series of exclamations when I appeared. Sonya was the first to recover, just a shade ahead of Edythe, who cried a joyful greeting.

With a smile which belied the hostile light in her eyes, Sonya leaned forward to shake hands. "Aden, *ma chere*, how delightful. Such a splendid surprise! But how neglectful of me you have been—you who once were such a wonderful man of business for me. I haven't even heard from you—in ages. No, don't sit there. A place shall be set for you next to me."

"Thanks, Sonya. But permit me to atone a bit with a compliment. My neglect does not seem to have brought lines of worry. You have grown younger—and more beautiful. We shall have to watch out, Tom and I, or one of us will lose our bachelorhood." I wondered if my smile hid my real thought. Then, "I had no idea any of you were here until I arrived last night. Just a little surprise visit to get away from work. Now I am certain of a wonderful time."

Edythe welcomed me as though I were a long absent brother. And Ted was cordial and his grip was firm, though there was something in his manner which told me he did not believe my coming to *The Maples* was entirely disinterested.

However, the breakfast was eaten under a barrage of sprightly conversation, in which I was made the target of many inquiries, with one or two references to my researches and my books.

Following the meal, we strolled to the porch for a little morning air and cigarettes. "We had planned to go for a motorboat trip," said Tom finally. "How about you, Aden? Feel like going along?"

"No, he's not going," interrupted Sonya. "He is going to remain here—with me. I've no end of things I just must talk over with him."

I acquiesced, smiling. But I had a suspicion that the woman was detaining me for a purpose that had to do directly with my mission to *The Maples*.

She and I trailed after the others to the wharf, waved them adieu, then turned and retraced our steps, both silent. We had reached a great sun-dial, midway along the stretch to the house, when she paused suddenly, rested her arms upon it and faced me.

"Aden," she began, and the look in her eyes was as hard as jade, "you're a fearfully poor liar. And you should know better than to try to deceive me. Tom Hewitt sent for you."

Her challenge was blunt — almost caught me off my guard. "Why should he send for me?" I parried.

Her mouth hardened. "I thought so. And now that you are here, what are you going to do?"

I held my temper, though my anger had me fever hot. "It isn't what I am going to do—it's what are you doing?"

"Still dodging, eh, Aden? Well, then, I'll be frank. I'm in love with Ted Ritchie. And I'm going to have him."

"You once told me that you loved me."

Her face crimsoned. Her hands clenched. I had been brutal. But I had been so deliberately, trying to make her so angry that she would betray herself completely.

"Oh, you—you——" In her fury she stammered. "Why I've hated you—always. I was only playing with you, playing to your vanity—until you had completed my business." She laughed mockingly. "Love you? You, with your

milk and water temperament. No, never. But I am in love now, with Ted. If only I had met him first, before any of——"

"Don't say it," I interrupted harshly.

"Why not? It's the truth. And why shouldn't we love each other? We're alike—intensely alive, eager for all the thrills which life can give. He's married? Yes. To a white-faced doll—a woman without a passion, a poor, clinging——"

"But his wife, nevertheless. A wife whom he loved, dearly, until——"

"Bah! More of your puritanical American ethics. Honor before honesty always with you. But what is the use of talking—to you? You haven't blood in your veins. You wouldn't understand. Still, I had better tell you the truth. Get every word, for I am in deadly earnest. I love Ted Ritchie. He adores me. I am going to take him. You can tell that to Hewitt, who brought you here. When I shall take him, I don't know—yet. But, if you interfere, if Herwitt interferes, if there is a scene—it will be soon. Perhaps, if we are let alone, I shall wait, until his wife awakes to the fact that she has lost him—will be willing to give him——"

"Have you forgotten the past—everything? That Ted was Chester's——"

"Don't you dare! But, never mind. You are like all blundering Americans. Once married, you believe a woman should cling to her husband—even beyond the grave. But I won't. I'm alive. And I'm going to keep on living, while there's breath in my body. Now you understand, fully. Lift just one finger to defeat my purpose and—— Well, you know Sonya. I shall not see you again—until dinner."

THAT night, after the others had retired, Tom and I again sat in the library, with only a shaded light—planning. I had told him of my quarrel with Sonya, and her threat. Plan after plan was discussed. But each in turn was discarded. For none could be carried out without forcing the issue with Ted. And such a course was certain to bring disaster.

It was when we were at our wits' end, when both of us were almost ready to give up for the night and seek sleep to revive our ragged nerves, that Tom suddenly bent forward and clutched my arm in a crushing grip.

But I also had heard. A faint rumbling, growing louder. It was the sound of a motor. In some manner, which I later was unable to account for, I seemed to become calm upon the instant, to be able to think with a clear brain and hold absolute control of my limbs.

"Come, Tom," I said firmly, pulling him to his feet. "It is Chester. We must go to him—talk with him, if he will." For an instant he hesitated, then followed me out upon the veranda, then down the steps and across the lawn.

Suddenly a machine darted out of the blackness of the distant shrubbery. It arose in long, sweeping spirals. We could see its every movement plainly in the perfect moonlight. Shoulder to shoulder, but without words, we watched, while the plane moved about in wide circles.

But the cruise of the machine was brief. Within minutes it began to descend, growing larger and larger, then landing in a long, swinging glide which carried it to a halt not ten feet from where we stood.

SOMEHOW, I was not afraid. Probably because I knew what to expect. Almost at the instant the plane ceased to move, its pilot lifted itself from the cockpit and wheeled, facing us. It was not a man, only a shadowy, hazy something which counterfeited life.

And yet, as the phantom drew itself to its full height and saluted us, the hand snapping from its bared head, I recognized Chester—Chester, as I had last seen him in the life, every line of his taut features betraying the agony which racked him.

I gasped his name, hoarsely. But there came no reply. No sign that it recognized our presence other than the salute.

For a full minute it stood, awesome, motionless. Then the phantom turned sharply and moved toward the house. I could not stifle a groan. Too well I recognized the limp in the step, the maimed foot being dragged.

Tom leaned against me. His hand gripped mine. And right then I couldn't move.

On, on, getting nearer to the house the phantom moved, slowly, deliberately.

"For God's sake, Aden, do something. It is going inside—Ted . . . Sonya."

Tom's words snapped me back to life, stung me to action. Shaking him off, I darted ahead. The phantom was on the steps—crossing the porch—almost at the open door.

"Chester! Chester! Wait. Speak—just a word!" I flung myself forward, through the doorway, to head it off.

But it was not there.

The next second Tom was at my side. "Aden, Aden, didn't you see? Didn't you realize?"

"What?" I gasped.

"When you entered the hallway, man, when you spoke. So help me, you walked right through it, as though it were mist. Then it was behind you. I reached out. It vanished, as you turned."

Trembling, we leaned against the frame-work, battling to recover our wits, listening to learn if others had heard. But no sound came. Finally I was able to move—and speak.

"Listen, Tom," I said, drawing him into the shadows. "I don't know what . . . Chester intended doing. But we dare wait no longer. We must do something to block Sonya. We must compel Ted to listen to reason or send her away. If we don't—we shall face a tragedy. Go to bed, go to sleep if you can. I'll be responsible for the next move. Tomorrow I shall do something."

THE following morning I made an effort to terminate the situation which I was certain was responsible for the repeated appearances of Chester's phantom. I did what I believed he had endeavored to make us realize was his wish. Seizing an opportunity when the others were engaged, I drew Ritchie aside and asked him to walk with me to the river.

He complied. But the sudden tightening of his lips and the hint of anger in his eyes, indicated he realized my purpose and was set to give battle. We did not speak until we were well beyond the house. Then I stopped him, in a little grove, and in plain English—as our long friendship warranted—told him he was treating Edythe unfairly and advised him to cease his flirtation with Sonya.

"Damn it, Aden, you're going too far! For old time's sake I'm not resenting this as I would to another. But you must cut——"

"Listen, Ted. I'm talking for your own good, because I'm fond of you—and Edythe—who was my sister's dearest friend. In carrying on this affair with Sonya, you're playing with fire. You are merely a human plaything in such hands as hers. And if you won't consider yourself, think of Chester. She broke his heart. You know it. And you saw mighty little which was attractive in her the night after Reynolds, your particular buddy, deliberately took his own life that he might escape all memory of her. You talked differently then."

"You—you!" His face was ashen and his whole body trembled as he struggled to keep from using the hands clenched at his sides. Then he again found words. "Don't interfere with me again, or so help me God, I'll make you regret it!" He swung on his heel and all but ran from me.

BUT, through the remainder of the day, there was a decided change in the attitude of both Ted and Sonya. When others were about, they studiously kept far apart. And not so much as by a covert glance was there evidence that they intended to continue their flirtation. However, I was not deceived. He had told her of our quarrel. And they had formed some sort of a pact to circumvent me. Trust her ruthlessness and diabolical cunning for that.

But I was not to be turned from my purpose to keep them under surveillance and break up their affair—before Ted had been entirely swept from his feet. So I deliberately began spying upon them. And twice, in the afternoon, from the windows of my room, I saw them in earnest conversation behind patches of shrubbery which concealed them from casual passers-by.

It was not until the next day, however, that I obtained an inkling of their scheme. The first hint came when Sonya announced that she had received a letter from a friend in New York, insisting that she come to visit her, and that she would leave *The Maples* within a few days, probably the following Sunday. After her announcement she spent much time in her rooms packing.

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. Some of these letters are 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.

How My Baby Came Back from the Dead

I DO not see why spirits should always be treated with such fearsome aspect. Without doubt there are horrible apparitions, materializations —whatever one wishes to call them. But there are, it seems to me, many more benign, good and well-wishing spirits than of the other kind. I know, because all my life I have, from time to time, and without conscious volition on my part, come in contact with spirit forms. In very few instances have they ever been sinister.

I had lost my baby, my little new baby that I had planned for so long and wanted so much. God, what agony! Mothers who have gone through that same suffering know about it. Such a perfect little body, such dark brown hair! He opened his eyes once and looked right at me. Then he closed them again and breathed slower—slower—slower. Perfect in formation he was, but without strength to live.

I couldn't leave my sickbed to do anything for him. Other hands cared for him, performed the last sad rites for him. They brought him in, laid in a tiny white casket.

I CANNOT write or think of it to this day without the tears streaming down my face. Why, oh why, does a strange fate take away these dear little mites for which we suffer so much pain to bring into the world? When they are wanted so much, why do they have to leave us? Ah, who can answer these heartbroken questions that have torn the soul of every mother who has laid away her dear child?

I was inconsolable. The nurse, the doctor, my husband—each begged me not to grieve so. I wept constantly, that tired, deep sobbing so wracking to the body, so difficult to control. My arms were always empty. Nights I would stretch them out to the comfort of the darkness, pray for a miracle that would bring back my baby. But my arms remained empty. I tried to imagine a soft, downy head pillowed close to my breast. I would waken from broken slumber as I curled my arm, as though a tiny form were within it. And fresh sobs would break out.

I heard the doctor when he told the nurse that I must be kept from grieving. I must have my attention detracted, my mind set upon other things, he said. Company was allowed, anything that would brighten me. But I would see no one but the three who belonged there, doctor, nurse, and husband. I grew weaker and weaker, but I didn't care. The nurse cared for me night and day, and the strain began to tell on her, too, poor thing. One afternoon she dropped onto the couch by the door, and fell asleep. It didn't matter. I wanted little those days, and called for almost nothing. I lay in a strange apathy.

And then I heard my mother's voice. It came from a distance at first, then drew nearer and nearer. Somehow I couldn't tell what she was saying, but I knew it was mother's voice. I lay very still. Even if I had been perfectly well, I would not have wondered, for she had appeared at rare intervals to me since her death several years before. Now it seemed as natural as though she were coming along the hallway I couldn't see from the bed where I lay.

But she wasn't. Of a sudden she stood at the foot of my bed. I saw her so plainly! In her arms she held my baby. She barely glanced at me, so intent was she in coddling the infant. He wasn't crying. He seemed perfectly contented and happy there in her arms, and on her face glowed the devotion of a grandmother for her only daughter's child whom she loved.

She was talking to me, however.

"Don't grieve so, Carol," she said, glancing my way quickly, and back again to my baby as though loath to lose the tiniest expression of his sweet face. "It's hard. I know, for I lost three. But you don't need to grieve so. He is safe now. I shall take care of him for you. Always I shall look out for him, until, in years to come, you shall join us."

HOW comforted I felt! I could not move, but my eyes strained to get a better glimpse of my child. I wanted her to bring him nearer, but I could not seem to ask, and she did not offer to come beyond the foot of the bed.

"I'll take care of him for you," mother agreed in a happy sort of voice that made me happy too. "Now, Carol, you have no need to worry about him. Some day you will come to us, and he will be safely waiting for you. I will care for him as carefully, as tenderly, as you could if he were alive. Don't grieve any more. There are more babies coming to you. You need your strength for them. Your husband is worried, too, and you must regain your health as quickly as possible. You know now that the baby is all right, and you must begin to think of those who are alive and looking to you."

SLOWLY they faded till they were like a soft, white, swirling mist, fading, fading, disappearing, my own eyes clinging to the little bundle in mother's arms.

Somewhere there in spirit land he is developing, and though it be years and years, as pray God it will for the sake of those loved ones living, yet I shall know him when the time comes for me to join him.

I did not waken the nurse, but lay quiet, for the first time really quiet and relaxed, since I lost my darling. I slept. When I woke I asked for food.

While the nurse was downstairs in the kitchen preparing a light repast for me, my husband came home from work. As always, he hurried up to me as soon as he had removed his hat and coat. I reached out a hand to him. He was so glad to see some sign of interest in living in my eyes once more!

"Burton," I said gravely, "the baby is all right. My mother is taking care of him. She came today and brought the baby for a few minutes. The baby is all right."

Although Burton is such a matter-of-fact sort of a man that he never "sees things," he is not a skeptic. He was interested at once, and I told him all about my visitors. He was as pleased as I.

It was not long before I was able to be up and about. I do not want to give the impression that I did not miss my baby after that. I did, God knows! I still miss him, even though the others that came later are growing into big children. There are times when my heart aches for him, little brown-haired chap among all the fair babies that followed. But no longer do I grieve away my life about him. I know he is with mother. I saw him, *alive*, a wriggling, happy litle bundle of infancy, in the arms of my mother. With a devoted grandmother to look out for him there in the world we know so little about, I know that all is well with him.

CAROL LANSING.

Dancers in the Sea

(*Continued from page* 13)

suddenly. Lieutenant Blake, smiling a fixed unnatural smile, more resembling the stenciled grimace of a mechanical puppet than of a man, had begun to divest himself of his coat. His officer's cap lay on the deck where he had thrown it. No one made a motion to stop him.

HE was ready in an instant. He deliberately stepped over the emergency suit, as if not seeing it, and began to climb into the one that only a moment before had been stripped from the dead Slim. He fastened the wide rubber pants about him hurriedly as if impatient to start.

"Either insanity or sheer braggadocio," I mentally accused. "This thing has got him!" And as the officer coolly adjusted the steel flange in the collar of his suit, my senses kept indicting "that guy hasn't got iron nerves—he hasn't got any!" But I never said a word.

Lieutenant Blake, as if challenging my very thoughts, looked over at me and grinned reassuringly.

"Superstition!" he said, and grimaced. "Lightning never strikes twice. . . ."

I did not hear any more. I was busy helping him with the heavy boots.

As he stood on the sea ladder fumbling with the air valve in his helmet, he leaned suddenly towards me and began to speak in dry hard cadences that were strangely reminiscent of a night on a North Sea patrol when we had dropped a depth bomb, and afterwards had watched together as a turgid black oil film slowly formed on the surface of the water. The smile had left his face.

"You're in charge! . . . If I jerk the depth line twice, sharp—like this," he illustrated with a whip motion of his right arm, "let me down slower. Three times," his tone was rasping, "—stop. But don't raise—not at first. I will use the regular signals only, at faster intervals—every five feet . . . and if they stop. . . ." His voice trailed off.

"Slim had a bad heart." His tone changed — became lower-pitched, more intimate. "He should never have gone down." He motioned for me to clamp down his visor. As the last bolt was tightened he stepped down into the sea and an instant later was lost to sight.

We stared as the waters closed over the rounded helmet and tiny bubbles began to flicker to the surface. We unreeled the line as if it were a live wire. It uncoiled, slowly, ominously.

I looked up from my watch only once. The faces of the group at the rail were drawn, cream-colored beneath dark tan. The waters seemed suddenly malignant . . . as if shrouding some evil genii in their sinister depths.

AS the line showed 85 feet I stared at it transfixed. It suddenly became taut and I felt my body grow rigid. There it was—the same twitching as before, but followed by a staccato, spasmodic jerking as if a thousand demons were signaling for release. It was a call for help from the depths of the sea. Then these stopped as suddenly as they had begun. The line lay slack on the water.

We began to pull at both lines. The lowering line seemed light, one of the men said. And the depth line ran in like a kite string after the kite has broken free. Easy and gentle-like, without resistance or feel of any sort.

It came up slowly. I counted every second, split them like a track coach with a stop watch as they passed in a gray parade. It was as if I was clocking the dogged, drugged last miles of a weary marathoner. Six hundred of them—long dragging seconds—and we pulled a deflated rubber suit over the side . . . like the other.

It was probably my imagination. It seemed a white-canvased sack, only incredibly light. Perhaps it was empty. It collapsed on the deck by way of confirming my queer suspicions. That spasmodic jerking! What had that been? A struggle, no doubt, with every blow vibrating over a dancing depth line.

I remember that I was unmoved. It all seemed so natural. A splendid stage set, with the darkened waters a perfect back-curtain, and the lights low. That was perfect too—for a death scene.

I unclasped the visor and with almost the same motion stripped the helmet from the head. Lieutenant Blake lay beneath. I distinctly remember that I was surprised. I had been so confident that the suit would be empty. I felt a vague sense of disappointment—as if the play was wrong.

I should perhaps have been delirious. I wasn't. Only curious and a bit disappointed.

It was Lieutenant Blake . . . a twisted, distorted smile identified him. But his face was livid, contused. A stain of red traced across his right cheek. He must have gashed it on the metal helmet. Perhaps he had forgotten and had tried to leap forward—leap out.

While we started, his body twitched convulsively—he gasped audibly.

Pungent rum was forced down his throat as he sputtered violently, coughed, and finally breathed regularly. He stared wildly about and raised one arm in the air. It held suspended there for a moment, his face working horribly. He seemed trying to strike out but his arm was held by some invisible force. At last it suddenly was released—flung forward in a frenzied blow and crashed cruelly on the deck.

His lips moved tremulously:

"There are people down there . . . alive!" He choked. "—alive! . . . thousands of them! . . ."

No one spoke.

Several times as he regained consciousness, he attempted to depict what he had seen, but all he could do was repeat in a flat, faintly articulate monotone ". . . thousands of them . . . living people . . . people! . . . thousands of them . . . alive! . . ."

Then occurred an occult perversion, a phenomenon which belongs rightfully in the realm of the metaphysical. I cannot explain it. It was not delirium, but curiosity that was tormenting me—unreasoning, staggering, deadly curiosity—as to what there was . . . down there on the floor of the sea.

"I am going down," I announced.

It was not my own voice. The words echoed from afar off.

"You are crazy, Bill!" The others c !led back to me from a great distance.

"Perhaps, but at least I'll know what to expect . . . now that Blake has seen them, and when . . . and . . . "

I carefully stepped over the suit that Lieutenant Blake and the dead Slim had used and motioned for the other. I was not superstitious.

THERE seemed nothing else to do. I was now in command, and the treasure—it lured like a mountain of gold—was just beneath us. My resolve seemed perfectly natural.

A tranquility, a gradual slowing down of life processes, exhilarated me. I—alone—was moving in a world that had slowed down almost to a halt. Someone had to go, I reasoned logically.

It was really easier than waiting on the deck staring at the water. And the water did not seem dark, nor cold. It suddenly looked warm, almost inviting. It fascinated me.

"The same signals," I directed. And then a queer thought, an eerie facetiousness seared my brain. I laughed out loud.

"You don't suppose they've caught on, do you? To our signals . . . I mean." I continued to laugh at my jest as the others looked blank. They had not seen the joke.

I felt warm all over, ecstatic, glowing. I had been cold only a few minutes before.

As I was lowered by degrees I could feel the air pressure increase. It seemed oppressively heavy. I opened the valve a little. It was all right now.

At first I could discern nothing. The opaque darkness of the water shut off everything. Then I could see a short ways ahead. Afterwards, as my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I could perceive distances. That was all.

I went down . . . down . . . down. I thought I must be near the bottom of the sea . . . when . . . a gyrating shadow . . . a wraithy, giant body, long and thin, loomed beside me. It undulated slowly not five yards away, waving grotesque, disjointed arms and legs, rythmically, in a gibberish cadence—like a wooden monkey on a stick.

Others in distorted and freakish positions danced about me.

I was chill. My body seemed numb. Cold drops of moisture froze to my forehead, trickled down into my eyes. The helmet sheathing seemed cold and damp.

I was conscious, however,—tragically conscious, of the sargasso sea of bodies —human bodies—which had sprouted magically about me. I seemed to be slipping slowly, softly, down into their midst.

A wraithy arm reached out and brushed across my visor. I could feel the clammy impact through the metal

On my other side, shapeless, grotesque arms were clutching at me as if to tear at my heart. Other hands were reaching . . . reaching. . . .

I signaled frantically. I clutched at the depth line desperately. I was afraid that it would be torn from my grasp.

At last after infinite centuries of waiting (it could not actually have been as much as a minute) I could feel myself rising. I gulped a deep breath . . . another. It seemed as if I had not breathed for hours. As I rose a spectral arm dragged along my body and trailed off my leaden boots in a last lingering caress.

MY single impression as I towered above the serried rows of bodies—safely out of their reach—was that they were fighting among themselves, as the sons of the dragon's teeth had fought so long ago. Fighting over me who was escaping from them—though, like the legendary warriors, perhaps they did not know.

I was conscious, I know, as I rose along side the lighter. I climbed up the diving ladder unassisted.

To the thousand questions phrased in the eyes of the silent group that circled about me, I repeated:

"Yes! There must be thousands . . ." I hesitated. It seemed a palpable lie. ". . . of human beings down there . . . fighting among themselves.

"No!" I corrected. Perhaps I had been wrong. "Not fighting—playing! . . . dancing!" I stopped. That was it.

But through my imaginative consciousness coursed weird, imaginative phrases.

"Dancing . . . to the rhythmic beat of the waves . . . a slow dance of death . . . living persons dancing a death dance."

AND so we returned to the ancient city of Odessa and told our tale of the living dead in the sea—just as I have recounted it here.

The denouement came later. After a torturous three acts, came (as the critics say) the belated epilogue, and cleared up the mystery. It was absurdly simple.

During the winter of 1918, a citizen informed us, when the Bolsheviki conflagration was sweeping like a prairie fire over terrorized Ukrainia in Southern Russia, a surprise attack upon Odessa by the revolutionists turned a battle into a veritable massacre. The defenders—defenseless men, women and children—were driven before the Red marauders like sheep, through the narrow streets to the land's end. They came at last to the buttressed dikes and the very edge of the sea.

Here they had their choice—of two deaths: to be cut down by malevolent devils or drown in the Black Sea.

The invaders were riding down the outer fringes of the ghastly hegira and slaughtering the stragglers without mercy. The others jumped into the sea. Burdened with heavy winter clothing, many of them in uniform, they did not have a chance for their lives in the tossing black waters. They sank like ballast.

The scientific explanation is likewise simple. Having sunk to the bottom they congealed in the icy waters and had never—not a single one of them—come to the top.

We left the country believing that they were destined, doomed, to dance eternity away . . . plashing, dancing, to the rythmic eddyings of icy currents.

I have since learned from Lieutenant Blake—whom I see occasionally when he is in port—that many of these bodies came to the surface and were recovered and buried the following year.

It was, of course, inevitable that when chemical re-agents neutralized the gases, the bodies should rise to the top—just as it is a law of physics that they should have retained their upright positions while dancing on the floor of the sea—with the upper portions, housing the air ventricles, swinging almost vertically upward while the lower halves remained down.

Blake also informed me that the bullion had been recovered two years later. But none of our party were there at the time.

"And so the guardian specter-cordon finally deserted the lost ship . . . to the last man," he concluded with a grim smile.

It made me thoughtful. And many times since I have caught myself thinking of those weird dancers in the sea . . . undulating . . . gyrating . . . shapeless arms . . . reaching . . . dancing that slow dance of death in the rythmic eddying of icy currents.

Pawn of the Unseen

(*Continued from page 33*)

smell of dirt that has long lain in the dark places and never known the sunlight—a fetid, heavy smell peculiar to cellars.

It was just an ordinary cellar, so far as they could see by a hasty reconnoitering. On one side was a row of coal bins, and on the other were locked bins, probably holding discarded furniture, clothes and furnishings of an ancient and earlier day, and things of like character.

Suddenly they stopped in their search, as a sound came to their ears.

"What's that?" whispered Terry as he grasped Marius' arm in a grip of steel.

The men listened, and as they listened a low chant seemed to come to them from above. It was faint—faint as the new wind in the tops of young trees, but there was something sinister and everlasting about it—something ageless, something of doom and of the grave.

"Sounds to me like the humming of that grave-watching bird over Grimm's body," said Marius finally, after they had listened for a space. And, indeed, that was what it was.

"Seems to come from right overhead,"

commented Terry, listening intently for the direction.

"Yes," said Marius. "The room with the body of Martin Grimm must be directly overhead, now that I come to think of it."

"Then we're standing just about underneath his coffin, I should say," said Terry.

"I think so," replied Marius.

The men moved to another part of the cellar.

"Let's see what we have here," said Terry, glancing around as he flashed his light on the bins.

"Wait a minute," said Marius. "Let me take a look at that lock again."

HE went over to one of the bins and directed his flashlight on the lock. The lock was hanging by the side of the staple, open—and a second look showed Marius that it had been broken.

"That's queer," he muttered, drawing the lock out of the staple.

"Someone been here?" inquired Terry, standing close to him, and peering over his shoulder.

"Looks like it to me," muttered Marius.

"Must have some purpose, then," said Terry. "Probably seeking something," he hazarded.

"If they haven't got it already," put in Marius. "Let's look the contents of this bin over, anyway."

They pushed the door open and flashed their lights inside.

The men gasped at what they saw, crowding forward that they might be able to see that their eyes had not been deceived, and that they were really seeing it.

The bin was about six feet high, covered at the top, and probably five or six feet broad and deep. It was filled to the top and sides with bundles of yellow and green paper, neatly sorted, neatly arranged—just like banks handle money.

"My God!" gasped Terry.

Marius echoed his exclamation.

"Is that money?" came from the amazed lips of Marius.

"It certainly is—twenty and fifty and hundred dollar bills," said Terry excitedly. "Filled to the top with them! Why, there must be billions of dollars here——"

"Lord! There must be enough to pay the national debts of every nation on earth!"

And there was. The money was neatly stacked, as in the vault of a bank, and each pile was banded with a paper band about an inch broad. Some of these bands had $5000 printed on them, some $10,000, and even the hasty glance that they were able to give revealed to them several with fifty and one hundred thousand numerals.

They closed the door hastily and confronted each other.

"This is impossible!" said Terry. "There isn't that much money in the world—there couldn't be."

"Yet there it is in front of us," persisted Marius. "I never saw such a collection. What does it mean?"

Terry shook his head. "Search me—yet, I think, that in addition to stumbling on this vast pile of money, we have accidentally hit upon something else. . . ."

He was silent for a bit, and Marius took up the thought.

"You mean, that here is a clue to what it is that has been going on here, don't you," said Marius. Terry nodded.

"That's just what I do mean," he said. "Nobody could have such a vast amount of money in cash in his house without it being the center of a huge deal of intrigue. Probably what we have just seen before us is the cause of everything that's happened. Why, man, do you realize what such an amount of money means?"

Marius nodded.

"If this is indeed so," went on Terry, "we have a tremendous responsibility before us—the responsibility of seeing that the money here does not fall into the wrong hands, for, I repeat, it would wreck our country by impoverishing our monetary system. If this is so," went on Terry, "we must——"

"Stop! Quick!" interrupted Marius "Put out your light!"

THE lights were out instantly, leaving them in a deluge of darkness as if no such thing as light had ever existed there. To their straining ears there came the sound of ribald and unhuman laughter—laughter such as was never heard by earthly ears before.

"That laughing again!" whispered Marius. "It's here——"

The two men whirled.

"Look!" gasped Terry. "That face!"

There, in the darkness, advanced and receded a yellow, fiendish face. It wavered, rose and fell, grinned in unearthly mirth, showing great toothless gaps, seemed to advance on them, and to fall back, all the while vague and shadowy in outline.

For a moment the men were rigid, petrified with horror and sudden fright.

Then the presence of each other made itself felt. The same impulse came to both of them at the same instant.

They whipped out their guns and fired point blank.

What next in this house of death, of ghostly foot-steps, of horrible laughter? Where did this untold wealth come from, that Terry and Marius have found? What of Lenore? Don't fail to read the next installment in March GHOST STORIES Magazine on the news-stands January 23rd.

The Crawling Specter of Hatfield Hall

(*Continued from page* 45)

To all outward appearances he was the same old Fred. He pulled out an old pipe that must have been death to all insect life that came near, and lighted it with a smile as we climbed into the car. But after this first burst of welcome he seemed to fall into a slump.

I've seen chaps with shell-shock that had the same attitude of silence, and I was rather troubled with a remote realization that something was the matter with his eyes. I do not mean that they were injured. They simply had an unhealthy brilliancy that seems always to go with jagged nerves.

"WE'RE not going out to the house at once," he said. "It is not so pleasant but that we can spare a half-hour or so of its cheery atmosphere. I want to show you Exhibit One."

"And where is Exhibit One?"

He answered me in the tone of a man who states a fact that is not particularly interesting:

"In the morgue."

The coroner was a little, bustling man, and he chatted affably as he led us back into a small room at the rear of his establishment. Something was lying there beneath a sheet. I turned back the corner.

"A negro!" I exclaimed.

"A servant of mine," Fred responded.

A doctor is no stranger to death. He grows accustomed to all its forms, and that which is ugly and terrible in human life he grows used to. But I did not want to look again at that figure under the sheet. I did not know how he died. He did not have the look of a man who had gone peacefully to his end.

"Not very nice," I commented. "What killed him?"

"We're waiting for you to tell us that." Fred re-lighted his pipe with a steady hand.

"You surely don't expect me to give a post-mortem verdict at a single glance. It might be any one of a dozen things. Why don't you have an autopsy?"

"The jury did not think it necessary. But I'm rather under the impression that a single glance tells volumes in this case. Or is it my active imagination?"

"Not wholly your imagination, Fred. I'm afraid he suffered a great deal, did he not?"

"I wasn't present. And is that all you can read—just suffering?"

I turned and studied my host. The harsh clanging tones of his voice were not those of a man in perfect mental health.

"Don't be a fool," I cautioned. "Nine men out of ten are afraid to die—and the fear shows in their faces."

Then we walked together to his car.

I HAD never visited Fred's home before. It stood on a hill overlooking a verdant lowland, on the banks of one of those pretty Virginia rivers that never seem to know where they want to go.

Hatfield Hall had been a splendid mansion in its day—the home of Fred's ancestors for generations back. It was built in the old Colonial fashion, with wide flanking driveways on either side and a broad, imposing portico supported by towering white pillars. But its splen-

dor had died in the previous century; its paint was flaking and decay had its hold upon it.

A house with decay upon it is like a human body with an incurable disease. Life can abide in it a little while, but it is irrevocably doomed.

The worms were at work in the joists of Hatfield Hall, the mold was in its sills, and the dry-rot was eating its weather boards. It had that indescribable air of a house that had long been deserted, and never could get used to the tramp of human feet again.

But I forced this out of my mind. As I said before, a doctor must not let his fancy get away from him.

Houses are nothing more or less than a combination of stone and brick and wood. They are all the same, big and little, rich and poor. But living things are different. And even I, a cold-blooded doctor, was given an instant's revulsion at sight of five great ghosts of oak trees about the base of the hill where stood Hatfield Hall. Every one of them was dead.

Fred noticed me looking at them.

"Give a nice air to the house, don't they?" he mused. "Five of 'em—dead from the roots up. Wouldn't surprise me if they walked."

He laughed softly. I looked at him dispassionately.

"You're talking nonsense," I told him. "Am I? Anything can walk on this place, old man! Wait—just wait. But there's a natural reason for these arboreal tragedies. The river used to flood these fields, almost every year, and they're simply drowned out. Funny thing!"

"What's a funny thing?"

He had stopped his car, and a negro servant came out to help us with the luggage.

"Funny thing how a river acts. About a hundred years ago this estate was a wonder—and the heirs came from all over the British colonies to fight for it. The river behaved then. Then it began to flood, year after year—drowned out all the crops, time after time, and always crept clear around the house.

The house itself was too high to be inundated. But naturally no one cared to live on an island in a swamp. No one did live there. For about a hundred years the thing has been falling to pieces. It has cost me three thousand to get it even to its present state. Four years ago the Government built a levee; and last year the water had drained off enough to farm. It's growing its first crop now."

"Then you haven't lived here long?"

"You can count the weeks on your fingers. But no sensible man would believe it. The calendar says so, although it doesn't seem possible. It has been at least that many lifetimes to me." He opened the door for me.

"Stop talking that rot, Fred," I warned, "or I'll leave you here to your melancholia."

"Don't, for God's sake!"

It was the kind of appeal no man likes to hear from a friend. It was too sincere, too earnest. And I felt no joy at all in striding down the long, dark hall of the old mansion.

AFTER dinner we pushed back our chairs, and very gravely he asked me to take one of the candles that lighted our table. He took one himself, and we started through the dark corridors.

"We haven't got the place wired yet," he explained. "In this respect we're just as modern as those ancestors of mine who used to drink Maderia at this same table." He turned and addressed the old colored man who waited on us.

"You can go to your cabin, Abraham, when the dinner things are taken care of."

The aged darkie bowed in a manner learned in more graceful days. He fitted into this decaying house. The gray of age was on his face that now and then came into the range of the candle-light, in his hair and on the hands with which he slowly and carefully handled the dishes.

"Cheerful old dog, isn't he?"

"Why do you keep him?" I asked. "And with this maze of vacant rooms, since you do keep him, why do you have him sleep out of the house?"

He turned to me with an odd smile.

"Why don't you ask him?" he suggested.

"You mean to say——"

HE led me to the great fireplace in the library, and we placed our candles on the mantel. Then he showed me the inscription.

"Read it," he said tersely.

I held the candle high. On a panel above the great mantel some one had carved a sentence in the wood. The work had been done with unusual skill, and the letters were perfect. I read the words aloud:

"ON THIS HOUSE MY LASTING CURSE, AND TO ALL WHO COME HEREIN."

"Well," he questioned me, "—how would you like to live with that?"

I turned to find him smiling—a slow, wan smile.

"So you think that this is the trouble with this house?" I asked.

He stopped smiling. I noticed his face seemed haggard.

I threw myself into a chair and looked at him.

"You don't need a doctor, Fred. You need a carpenter to cut that thing away. It won't do. If you had nerves of steel, living in the shadow of that inscription in this decaying house, would certainly end you up with a nerve-explosion in time. I suppose some one had a grudge, long ago?"

"Quite right. I don't know much about it myself—it's all lost in the mist of the past. The man who wrote it there had noble blood and a wicked heart. There isn't much more known about him. His name was Sir Edmund Bourdillion, but of course that doesn't matter. He tried poppy-raising in Ceylon until the East India Company squeezed him out, and then he came here. And the rest—isn't very nice."

"Tell it!" I said. "You'll feel better about it afterward."

He looked steadily into the flame, and

continued, though he seemed reluctant.

"There's not much about it. It all occurred a hundred years ago—when the estate belonged to Edmund's first cousin George. Those were the days when the plantations, farmed by slave labor, paid tremendous incomes. I guess Sir Edmund couldn't wait for his cousin to die. He was next in line—and one day they found George dead."

"Very pleasant, so far," I told him as he paused. "And then?"

"He was in the prime of his youth and strength, and there wasn't a mark on him that could have caused his death. And please keep your mind off what I showed you in the morgue when I tell you that he looked as if he had died in terrible pain."

He paused and eyed me. "He did have a couple of queer cross-cuts on his ankle, but that wouldn't have killed a chicken. They accused Sir Edmund of poisoning him. The men came with guns and dogs. Edmund would likely have died with a rope around his neck if it hadn't been for the river. It flooded then, for about the first time. As soon as they could, they put off in boats and came over. But the fun of shooting at him through the windows of the house failed to materialize. That's all there was to it."

"You mean he got away?" I asked.

"By a very quick and certain route. He lay at the edge of the water, and evidently he had taken the same dose with which he dispatched his cousin.

"On the mantel they found that inscription you just read, put there by his own hand. And, since only recently the flood water has drained away, I am the first to have the pleasure of living under it."

"Nonsense!" I told him. "You said in your letter that it was 'either nerves or the devil.' That colored man died a natural death. I've seen heart-failure in younger and stronger men. Fred, listen to reason now—it's simply a flagrant case of nerves."

He shook his head slowly. "You don't know it all. Perhaps before you give your professional opinion you had better let me tell you the rest. Doctor Caleb, did you ever hear of me being troubled with nerves?"

"No——"

"Was the old Fred Hatfield that you knew, a man to be frightened by a rotten house beside a river, silly inscription on the wall, and the discovery of a dead negro in a hallway?"

"You were never like that," I replied.

"And I'm not now. I'm the same man I always was. It was not just a ridiculous impulse—my sending for you. Perhaps it was more that I wanted company, if only for a night. Yet honestly and frankly, I'm in need of aid. I don't expect you can do anything for me, unless you give me a kindly dope that will help me get the old eight hours!

"When a man works as hard as I do, he needs regular sleep," he went on. "Besides, I remembered what a cold-blooded wretch you always were, and I couldn't help thinking you'd give me reassurance. You've been kind so far, and before you mark me down as an idiot or a madman, let me tell you the rest. Let me point out a coincidence——"

"It is obvious enough," I interrupted.

"Yes. They died without a mortal wound upon them—both of them. About a hundred years afterward—three nights ago to be exact—I find a dead negro in my hall. He also had no mortal wound upon him.

"You mentioned heart-failure, I think—or maybe suicide from poison. Are these darkies that work for me the kind to take life so seriously that they'd try to end it with poison, and then swallow the bottle?"

HE got up and pulled out the drawer of a desk near us. "Here are Exhibits Two and Three."

Placing two objects in my hands, he stood back, and with the firelight shining in his eyes, intently watched me examine them.

"Well?" he asked.

"An ordinary jack-knife—as any workman would be expected to carry," I commented. "And a bandana handkerchief smelling of tobacco. What about them?"

"They were with the body—a knife and a handkerchief. It doesn't make very good sense, does it? I haven't shown them to the coroner. If he wants to think my servant died of heart-failure, I am going to let him think so. The handkerchief was partly over his face. He had the knife, opened, clasped in his hand. That puts dynamite under your heart-failure theory. A man doesn't draw and open a knife to fight off a disease."

"You say he had no marks upon him?"

"None that I could see. I'm sorry, Doctor, that I can't show you Exhibit Four."

"What do you mean?"

"Exhibit Four cannot be put on display. I'm sorry—because it was just a sound. It came just as I bent over the body. It was in the dark, just beyond the reach of the beams of my candle. It wasn't the wind, because the wind had gone down. It wasn't a decaying board—because a decaying board don't run along a corridor in front of you. I've heard rats in a ship, too. It wasn't a rat."

He paused, then:

"Doctor, can't you bring your scientific skill to bear and——"

"I don't see how science will help you in this case. You need a vacation—a freshened viewpoint."

"Wouldn't help!" He turned to me with glowing eyes. "Listen, Doctor, the man who made that curse died a hundred years ago. Tell me—can a dead man project his maledictions down the years? Can the human mind remain a factor and a force after life has passed?"

"No—not unaided. It must have agents."

"But what of those in the South Seas who have been prayed to death? Can a prayer live? If it can, a curse that is nothing but a degenerate prayer can live too! Life is material. So are the vibrations that cause sound. Reports on the supernatural generally agree on one point—the nature of the sound the visitor makes. We'll suppose he does not speak. There are no foot-falls—yet there is a sound. And that sound always indicates something—to those who can interpret it. In this case Doctor, there was a rustle . . . a low, whispering . . . rustle.

VIRGINIA in June is usually hot as the tropics. But the fourth night the wind sprang up and brought the cold. It was one of those chill ocean winds, and before we went to bed we heard it, in the dead oaks about the house, thundering at the window panes, shrieking in the chimneys. Ordinarily the fire was an ornament only. To-night its warmth felt good.

"The night I found Sam started out just this way," he told me as we said good-night.

"Cheerful bit of information!" I commented to myself as I went to my room.

For a long time I lay and listened to the wind. It began to wane, and the chill grew more pronounced. I was just dropping to sleep when I heard a step in the corridor. Some one rapped at my door.

"Who is it?" I called.

It was Fred, and he carried a candle. His voice was very subdued.

"Would you mind getting up, Doctor?" he asked tremulously.

"Would you mind explaining why—first? I don't call this a pleasant night for a stroll."

He turned his great dark eyes upon me. "Don't joke, old man—I mean it. I may be a fool—but I'd like a little companionship anyway."

I was on my feet in an instant. We sat down at the edge of the bed. "What's the matter, Fred?" I asked quietly.

"Oh, nothing particularly—except that our friend that rustles is abroad again." He began to search the pockets of his dressing-gown for a smoke. "It may strike you as funny, Doctor. But I fail to see the joke in it any more. I've listened 'til I'm tired."

"You mean——"

"I mean I've just been hearing the same sound that I heard that night in the hall when I found Sam dead. Only, I seem to be the source of attraction this time. It's a rustle, with a little whisper going along with it. I heard it first in the corridor, and then I heard it on my threshold, and then the same sound reached me from the far side of my room, near my closet. It wasn't very pleasant, Doctor.

"I took my candle and looked about, but it doesn't seem to be the kind of a thing you can see with a candle. I think the thing's in my room now. I'd like you to go back there with me—now."

"All right," I replied.

His was a large room on the lower floor. Whatever had rustled along his wall was certainly gone. Either that or it was of a nature that could not be found with candle-light. We looked under the bed and in the closet. We peered out the window and along the corridor. All the time Fred kept his hand in the pocket of his dressing-gown.

"What have you in there?" I asked him.

"A gun," he answered. He took it out,

and showed it to me. It was an ugly little automatic of about thirty-eight calibre.

'That's better protection than I could ever be," I reassured him. "A good night's sleep would be better yet. I'm going back to bed."

"Good-night!" he said.

"Good-night!" I stepped close to him. "And remember, old boy—life is not a thing to be cursed away. You can't kill with a curse, and neither can that damnable old ancestor of yours. Only material agents can kill. Good-night—and go to sleep!"

His eyes followed me as I went out his door and down the corridor.

IT must have been close to dawn when I heard the sound. I may have been merely dozing. Or, I might have been deep asleep. But whatever my state before, I was wide awake at the first vibration that reached my ear. It was a shot that leaped through the halls like a blast of wind, and caused me to jump instantly to my feet.

The shot was followed by absolute silence. I strained in vain for a second shot, or the sound of a struggle, or hurrying feet.

The human brain acts with lightning speed in a crisis and in the instant that I stood there fumbling for a match, I was swept by currents of emotions and thoughts and regrets. The instant seemed a lifetime. There was fear, of course. No man ever gets away from fear. Worse still, there was terrible remorse that I had been so blind, so careless.

Why had I been so sure, so insolently confident! Who was I to name the laws of life and death,—such laws as human beings, however wise, will always find an inscrutable mystery. Why had I let my old friend go back to his room? Was it because I thought that only material agents could do material harm? How many and how vast were the possibilities of the complex mysteries of life, and how little did I know whether a curse projected down the years could or could not blast such an intangible thing as a human life?

I had all these thoughts in the instant before my match burst into flame. I lighted my candle, then sped down the hall. I waited for a fraction of a second at the door of Fred's room, and it might be that I heard a rustling somewhere in the shadow of the corridor. The door was closed, and the room was still.

"Fred!" I called.

There was no answer.

I pushed open the door and entered.

I glanced at the bed first. Fred was not in it. Then as I held the candle high I saw the dim outline of his form huddled on the floor.

He had his dressing gown on and was lying on his back, his pistol on the floor a few inches from his outstretched right hand. On the sleeve of his left arm I saw what appeared to be blood stains, then I noticed that his left fore-finger had been completely shot away.

I bent over him and held the candle to his face. "God!" I muttered, "He's dead!"

But an instant later when I held my ear to his breast I could hear the faint stirring of his heart. He might be dying, but certainly a spark of life still remained.

I did not practice first-aid, however, right at once. Something else engaged my attention. Near the threshold of the door I had just passed through, I heard the *thing* that rustled.

Fred had described the sound exactly. It was a rustle, distinct as a rustle of a garment, and a little whispering sound that went with it. It was just in the corridor outside, rustling past on its errand of stealth. It was a faint sound truly—scarcely discernible above the low murmur of the wind. Yet it was just as tangible, just as real, as the stained garments I had fingered, or the ugly pistol on the floor. Evidently it had waited in the shadows as I had come in and—now it was making its escape!

I DID not let myself think what kind of a *thing* it might be. It had laid Fred low with a finger missing, and an unconsciousness that might any moment give way to death. So I took up the pistol and crept out into the hall.

The *thing* heard me coming, and went rustling down the corridor. I could not trace the sound exactly. The walls of the old house seemed to gather and fling back the sound, just as Fred had said, so that it seemed more like a whisper in the air than a moving, living something in the corridor in front of me.

I darted down after it, and it seemed to glide in front. I could not see with my candle. It only lighted a little space in front of me, and the fugitive remained just beyond the circle of light. Sometimes the sound seemed low down, and sometimes it was so refracted and echoed by the walls that it seemed to fill the hall.

It turned a corner. I raced behind it. It seemed to be as fleet as the wind. I paused to listen. The sound seemed to have died away. I crept about the corner of the hall, and advanced until the wall at the other end blocked my progress.

Then I whirled—for I heard it doubling back down the corridor again. Evidently it had waited in the shadows, and I had crept past it. I didn't stop to wonder what manner of *thing* it could be to lie so still and so invisible against the wall that I could not see it as I passed with a candle. I simply raced after it, my pistol ready in my hand.

It halted again. This time I stalked it with consummate care. I did not want to give it a chance to lie in ambush for me. Sometimes I heard a faint whisper that died away, and then a scratching, fumbling sound—and then the rustle that I had marked before. There would ensue long periods of silence, when we seemed to be hunting each other.

But I knew that I was slowly driving it toward the end of the hall, where it would have to come to bay. It waited and loitered, and whispered, and rustled, but ever it continued its stealthy advance. And now the faint extremity of my candle beams ended at the wall. I crept nearer, my eyes trying to probe

the darkness. And now I was close enough that the wall was revealed in the candle-beams, yellow and unbroken. And nothing seemed there at all.

I was expecting anything in the world. No shape, no form, however outside the ken of human beings, could have astonished me a great deal. But I had one awful second at the realization that there was nothing there at all.

But yes . . . as I held the candle high, that which seemed at first a shadow, began to take shape as a living *thing*. At the corner of the hall, next to the wainscoating, something ominous and deadly was coiled like a great thick rope. I could see it now! I could see its head, its broad hood, its evil, glittering eyes. I could hear its hiss. It was a serpent. It was the great king *Cobra* of the Orient—such as was never seen in a Virginia house before.

THERE remains little else to tell. Old Sir Edmund had not relied alone on the poison of his hatred to remain a malediction on the house. He had planted these poisonous serpents in the cellar beneath.

He had brought them with him from Ceylon. In the long ago they had been the instruments of his cousin's murder and his own suicide—and, after his death, they had lived there through the years breeding evil in that ghastly place. They had killed Sam, the negro servant. Only by great presence of mind had Fred escaped the same fate.

No man knows how many of its breed Sir Edmund had brought with him. In the snake hunt that followed, the damp moldering cellar yielded a half dozen of the vile creatures. Virginia had evidently failed to offer the proper climatical conditions for their increase. They are nocturnal creatures, and when the wind blew and the nights were chilly, they left their cold cellar and crawled through the many gaps and rat-holes in the planking to the warmer halls above.

The knife and the handkerchief were simply first-aid instruments that Sam had taken from his pocket. With his knife he had evidently intended to cross-cut the wound, and with his handkerchief make a tourniquet.

But the *cobra's* poison does not wait for such instruments. It sweeps through every vein like lightning. Sam had not lived even long enough to fasten his tourniquet. Of course a hasty examination of his black skin did not reveal the fine punctures made by the fangs.

When Fred was well enough he filled in the final links in the chain of circumstances. He had heard the rustle again, and had chased it to his closet. As he reached down to lift up some bedclothes on the closet floor, the serpent had struck him in the finger. If he had waited a single moment he would have died, and no medicine in the world could have saved him. But he did not wait—he shot away the poisoned finger.

Exhibit Four was once a sound. Now it is a brown *cobra* skin, six feet long and several inches across, that rustles when the wind strikes it.

This gruesome souvenir Fred has stretched across the letters of the Bourdillion curse—which tells the story.

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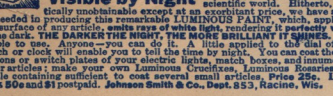

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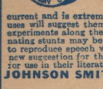
SEX Indicator 25c

SEX INDICATOR

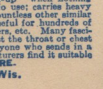
Hold the **MAGIC INDICATOR** over a man's hand—instantly it moves in a straight line, backward and forward. Hold it over a woman's hand and it describes a complete and continuous circle. The same action can be obtained over a letter written by a man or woman, etc. It is fascinating; baffling. We have never been able to figure out how it's done—but we've never seen it fail. Many novel and entertaining feats may be performed with the Sex Indicator. For example, similar results can be obtained with animals, cats, dogs, rabbits, canaries, chickens, etc. Also used to predetermine the sex of chickens and birds, etc., in fact it is sold as a patented egg tester in Europe. **Price 25c, or 3 for 65c, postpaid.**

ANARCHIST BOMBS



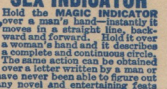
One of these glass vials dropped in a room full of people will cause more consternation than a limburger cheese. The smell entirely disappears in a short time. **30c a box, 3 Boxes for 80c**

INVISIBLE INK



The most confidential messages can be written with this ink, for the writing MAKES NO MARK. Cannot be seen unless you know the secret. Invaluable for many reasons. Keep your postals and other communications from prying eyes. Great fun for playing practical jokes. **Only 15c Bottle**

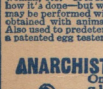
MIDGET BIBLE



GREAT CURIOSITY

Smallest Bible in the world. Size of a postage stamp. **200 Pages.** Said to bring good luck to the owner. A genuine work of art. Must be seen to be appreciated. Make good money selling them to friends, church acquaintances, etc. **PRICE 15c each, 3 for 40c, 7 for $1.35, 100 for $7.50.** Also obtainable in Leather Binding, with gold edges. **Price 50c each, 3 for $1.25, $4.50 per doz. Magnifying Glass** for use with Midget Bible, **15c.**

K.K.K.



Everything about the **Ku Klux Klan** told in a clear, fearless manner. Book tells all—How it started and was suppressed in 1871—The New Ku Klux Klan—How organized—How members are enrolled—Oath of the Klan—**Questions for Candidates**—Obedience—Objects of the Order—Obedience —Fidelity—Pledge of Loyalty—**Ku Klux Klan and the Masons**—The Jews—The Masons—Real K. of C. Oath—The New Ku Klux Klan, etc., etc. Latest and most complete book on the Klan published. **Price, 35c,** postpaid.

MAGICIAN'S OUTFIT

Apparatus and Directions for a Number of Mysterious Tricks Enough for an Entire Evening's Entertainment

ANYONE CAN DO THEM 75c

It is great fun mystify ing your friends. Get this Conjurer's Cabinet, and you will be the cleverest fellow in your district. It contains the apparatus for seven first-rate tricks, including The Disappearing Rose, that can be placed on the lapel of your coat, vanishes from sight at will; the Magic Vase and Ball Trick (a Wooden Ball is placed inside, and upon replacing the lid has disappeared and is found in someone else's pocket); The Magic Nail with which you can apparently cut your finger almost in two; the Wonderful Card Trick (a card is placed in an envelope, and when open an entirely different card altogether is found); The Disappearing Coin Box a coin is placed in the little wooden box, and, when opened to have vanished entirely, or can be made to change into a coin of another denomination); The Famous Dissolving Penny Trick; The Glass Goblet and Vanishing Coin Trick (a coin is dropped into a glass of water, and when the water is poured out the coin has vanished). With the tricks described above we send full printed instructions for performing each trick, so that anyone can readily perform all the tricks to the great amusement of their friends or the public. Any boy of ordinary intelligence, with this Cabinet of Tricks in his possession, can give a parlor entertainment not inferior to some regular magicians. Besides the tricks contained in the Cabinet, there are many other feats and illusions fully explained with full printed instructions, for which you easily make or procure the necessary apparatus. This unexcelled Cabinet of Tricks for **ONLY 75 CENTS POSTPAID TO ANY ADDRESS.**

A DeLuxe Edition of our new 1927 CATALOG mailed on receipt of 8c. Only book of its kind in existence. 850 pages of all the latest tricks in magic, the newest novelties, puzzles, games, sporting goods, interesting books, curiosities in seeds and plants, etc., unprocurable elsewhere.

STAGE MONEY

With a bunch of these bills, it is easy for each person of limited means to appear prosperous by flashing a roll of these bills at the opportune time and peeling off a genuine bill or two from the outside of the roll, the effect created will be found to be all that can be desired. **Prices, postpaid: 40 Bills 20c, 125 for 50c, or $3.50 thousand postpaid.**

Wonderful X-Ray Tube

A wonderfullittle 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.**

Good Luck Ring

Quaint and Novel Design

A VERY striking and uncommon ring. Silver finish, skull and crossbone design, with two brilliant, flashing gems sparkling from the eye. Said by many to bring Good Luck to the wearer, hence the name, Good Luck Ring. Very unique ring that you will take a pride in wearing. **ONLY 25 CENTS.**

Exploding Cigarettes

JUST LIKE ORDINARY CIGARETTES, BUT SUCH REAL STARTLERS! The box contains ten genuine cigarettes of excellent quality. They appear as real, but when each cigarette is about one-third smoked, the victim gets a very great surprise as it goes off with a loud **BANG!** A great mirth provoker yet entirely harmless. **Price 25c per box.**

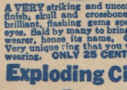
Popular Watch Charms

15c

ONLY 3 for 40c; $1.35 doz.

Very pretty little curiosities and decidedly novel, fitted with Magnifying Lens that enlarge the pictures to a very surprising degree; in fact, it seems almost incredible that a clear picture could be possible in such a small compass, and how sharp and distinct they show up when you look through. Some of the many views—Actresses, Views of Panama Canal, Lord's Prayer in type, etc.

CIGARETTE MAKER



Roll your own and save money. Makes them better and quicker besides saving more than half. Use your favorite brand of tobacco. Neat, useful article that pays for itself. Made entirely of metal, nickel-plated. **Price 25c postpaid.**

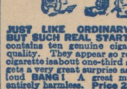
MAGIC FLUTE

Wonderfully Sweet Toned and Musical

Post Paid 25c

The Magic Flute, or Humanatone, is a unique and novel musical instrument that is played with nose and mouth combined. There is just a little knack in playing it which, when once acquired after a little practice will enable you to play any sweet music that somewhat resembles a flute. There is no fingering, and once you have mastered it you can play all kinds of music with facility and ease. When played as an accompaniment to piano or any other musical instrument, the effect is as charming as it is surprising.

Novelty Badges



Kissing Permit 10c *Garter Inspector 10c*

Two very novel metal badges, nickel plated, that you can wear, giving you fun out of all proportion to their trifling cost. **10c, each badge, 3 for 25c, or 75c per doz. p.p.d.**

BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL

Price $1.00 Postpaid

This well made and effective Pistol is modelled on the pattern of the latest type of Revolver, the appearance of which alone is enough to scare a burglar, whilst, when loaded, it will probably prove just as effective as a revolver with real bullets, without the danger to life. It takes the standard .22 Calibre Blank Cartridges, that are obtainable most everywhere. Even the most timid women can use it with perfect safety and frighten a thief without risk to herself or anyone else. **A Great Protection Against Burglars, Tramps and Dogs.** You can have it lying about without the danger attached to other revolvers. We sell large numbers around the 4th of July. Well made of solid Metal. **PRICE ONLY $1.00 Postpaid. Blank Cartridges 22-cal., shipped by express only, 50c per 100. Johnson Smith & Co., Dept. 853, Racine, Wis.**

Sneezing Powder

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 carwill 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**

Mystic Skeleton 10c pd.

A jointed figure of a skeleton 14 in. in height, will dance to music and perform various gyrations and movements while the operator may be some distance from it.

Serpent's Eggs

Box contains 12 eggs. When lit with a match, each one gradually hatches itself into a snake never less than 2 feet long when lighted. It curls and twists about in a most lifelike manner. **Price per box, 10c ppd.**

BOYS! BOYS! BOYS!

THROW YOUR VOICE

Into a trunk, under the bed or anywhere. Lots of fun fooling the teacher, policeman or friends.

THE VENTRILO

a little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it.

Never Fails. A 16-page course on ventriloquism, and the Ventrilo, ALL FOR **10c** postpaid.

ITCHING POWDER

This is another good practical joke; the intense discomfiture of your victims to everyone but themselves is thoroughly enjoyable. All that is necessary to start 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.

10c box, 3 boxes for 25c or 75c per doz boxes

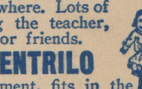
Great Fire Eater

Most Sensational Trick of the Day!

With the Fire Eater in his possession any person can become a perfect salamander, apparently breathing fire and ejecting thousands of brilliant sparks from his mouth, to the horror and consternation of all beholders. Harmless fun for all times, seasons and places. If you wish to produce a decided sensation in your set or neighborhood, don't fail to procure one. We send the Fire Eater with all the materials, in a handsome box, the cover of which is highly ornamented with illustrations in various colors. **Price** of all complete only **30 cents,** postpaid.

SQUIRT ROSE

25c



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. Cowhillikers! 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.**

LOOK 35¢ Look

Wonderful Instrument. Greatest thing yet. Nine separate articles in one. Everybody delighted with it. Odd, curious and interesting. Lots of pleasure as well as very useful. It is a double Microscope for examining the wonders of nature. It is also an Opera Glass, a Stereoscope, a Burning Lens, a Reading Glass, a Telescope, a Compass, a Pocket Mirror, and a Laryngascope —for examining eye, ear, nose and throat. It is worth all the cost to locate even one painful cinder in the eye. Folds flat and fits the pocket. Something great—you need one. Don't miss it. Sent by mail, postpaid. **Price, only 35c or 3 for $1.00** postpaid.

JAPANESE ROSE BUSHES

The Wonder of the World

Japanese Rose Bushes **bloom all the year round.** Just think of it. Six weeks after planting the seed, the plants will be in **full bloom.** It may not seem possible, but we positively **mean it to be so.** They will **bloom every ten weeks,** Summer or Winter, and when three years old the bush will be a **mass of roses,** bearing from five hundred to a thousand roses on each bush. The flowers are in three shades —white, pink, and crimson. The plants will do well both in and out doors. We guarantee at least three bushes to grow from each packet of seed. **Price, 10c** packet, 3 pkts. for **25c** postpaid.

10 Cts.

ADDRESS ORDERS FOR ALL GOODS ON THIS PAGE TO

JOHNSON SMITH & CO. DEPT. 853, RACINE, WIS.

Postage Stamps Accepted

The New Way

to buy a Fountain Pen

You Buy Through One Who Owns One — or Mail Coupon Below

NEVER before have you heard of any fountain pen so sure of satisfying everybody that its manufacturer could adopt a "Try-it-before-you-Buy-it" sales policy such as this!

It's the amazing new fountain pen that everybody's talking about. . . . The perfect pen for your personal use. . . . The practical, moderate-priced gift for your friends. . . . The Postal Reservoir Pen (Named Postal because Uncle Sam is our exclusive selling agent and he saves you the retailer's and wholesaler's profits. Named Reservoir because it holds three times as much ink as ordinary self-filling fountain pens.)

Never before has any new pen created such a sensation in such a short time. In less than six months, more than fifty thousand new users have become enthusiastic over its remarkable features.

Actual Size is Larger Than This

Read These Remarkable Postal Features

Transparent barrel—You can always see exactly how much ink you've got. You'll never have to guess again.

Unbreakable—You can even step on your Postal Pen without injury. Beautiful, never clogging, durable

Iridium-tipped, solid 14-Karat gold point—The same quality of point used in pens costing up to $75.

Holds 3 to 4 times more ink than any other self-filling pen—An entirely new principle in fountain pen construction makes this possible—no space wasted by rubber sac and mechanism in barrel.

Self-filling—Appeals to men and women alike because it fills itself by the simplest method ever invented.

ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEED

The materials and craftsmanship are absolutely guaranteed to be equal or superior in quality to those found in any other pen, whether sold at $7, $8.75 or more.

Fill it with Ink—Use it 5 days

Then if you do not agree that it is the most satisfactory fountain pen you ever used regardless of price, return it to us and get your money back!

Only One Way to Get This Pen!

It would be impossible to sell the Postal Pen at $2.50, the low price upon which its inventor insists, if we sold it through the retail stores. Their profit alone on a pen of this quality would be more than what you pay for a Postal Pen. And so we are willing to make you this unheard-of offer:

If you can wait just a day or two for your pen (shipments made within 24 hours after receipt of order) you can save from $5 to $6.25 and get the most satisfactory pen you ever saw. Simply mail the coupon below. And . . .

When your Postal Pen arrives, fill it with ink—*use it 5 days*—then return it if you are willing to part with it! ! !

How You Can Actually Earn A Postal Without Cost

With each Postal Pen you receive absolutely FREE 5 Premium Post Cards, each worth 50c on the purchase price of another Postal Pen. You can easily sell these cards at 50c each and earn back the cost of your Postal Pen. You can sell them, give them away, or dispose of them in any manner you wish. No strings to this offer.

Merely an easy way to get, without cost, the most dependable and unusual fountain pen ever made, the one pen so sure to please that its manufacturer can afford to let you try it out before you buy it.

But mail coupon right away—don't wait! Send no money—mail coupon now!

POSTAL PEN CO., INC.
Desk 160, 41 Park Row, New York, N. Y.

You may send me a Postal Reservoir Pen on 5 days' trial. If I am not entirely satisfied with it, I have the privilege of returning it and you are to refund the full purchase price. I am also to receive 5 premium postcards, each worth 50c on the purchase price of a new Postal Pen. I reserve the right to sell these cards at 50c each or dispose of them in any way I wish. I will pay postman $2.50 upon receipt of my pen. Send me the model I have checked. ☐ Men's Size. ☐ Women's Size.

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City _____ State _____

If you live outside the United States send International Money Order with Coupon.

Costs Only $2.50

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