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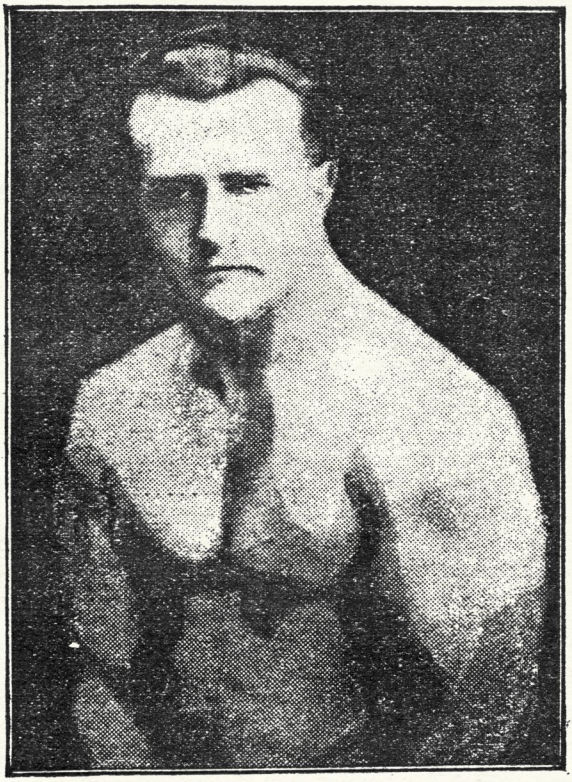

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Contents

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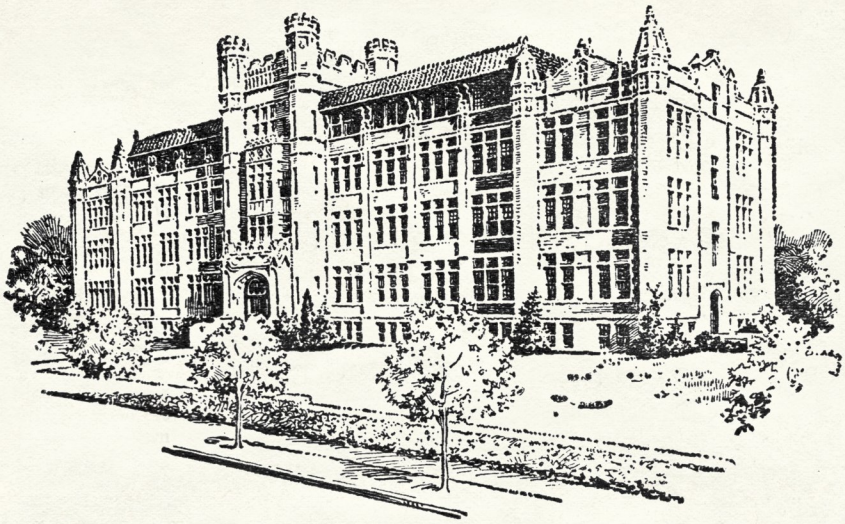

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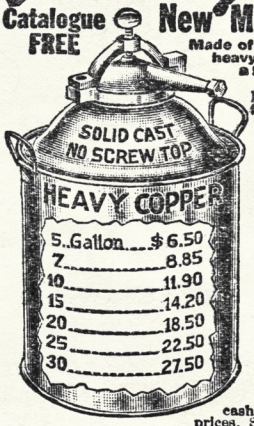

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Her voluptuous body wove out its rapture and allure —the shadows whirling like mad about her

By JACK BRADLEY

MASTER of

I HAD come to the little park with a book but who could read a book when the park is drenched in a flood of warm spring sunshine and a spring wind is rustling through the trees? With a sigh I crammed the book back into my pocket and turned my attention to a youngster playing on the walk before me. He was engaged in scientific research, this young man, studying the mystery of his shadow, and he was having a great time of it. Back and forth he toddled, vastly puzzled by this strange, dark playfellow who would never let him come any closer.

"And the odd thing about it," a voice at my side remarked, "is that the greatest scientists in the world know no more of the real nature of the shadow than that baby."

I turned to look at the man who had spoken. One glance was enough. "Park Bum!" It was written all over him, from the shabby, greasy, old suit, that was a mass of wrinkles from having been slept in, to the rheumy, bloodshot eyes, that would never look directly at one. A small, terribly emaciated man, with skin blotched and reddened by bad liquor. He was no different from the hundreds of other park bums who slept in parks and hallways nights and begged enough nickels and dimes days to buy liquor and, when there was ten or fifteen cents to spare, a meal at the lowest priced restaurants. Since he had spoken to me, I answered but it was a very curt answer.

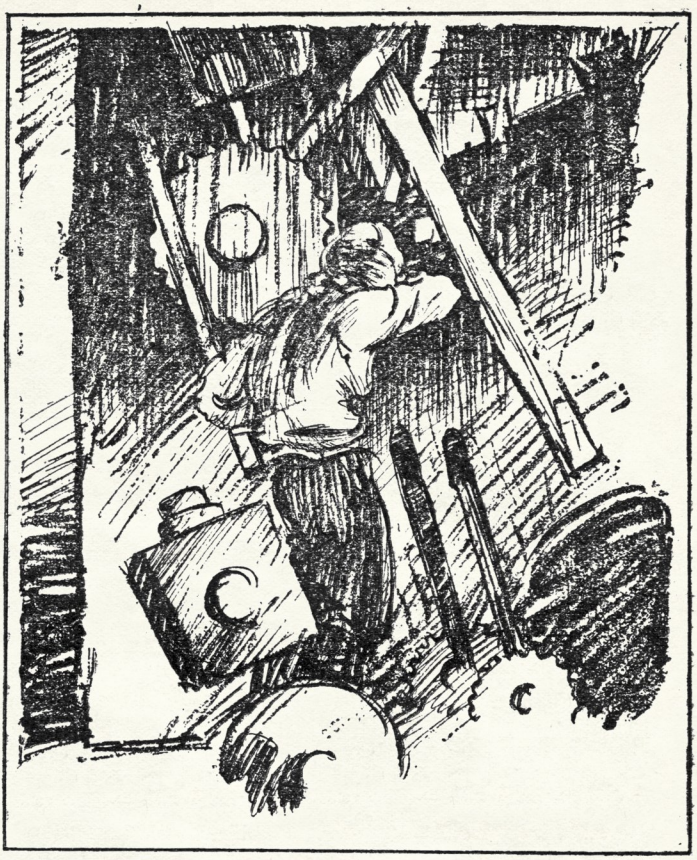
"What?"

"The shadow," he replied. "The one mystery that man can never hope to solve."

"BUT I don't understand," I persisted. "There is no particular mystery to a shadow. It is merely a partial absence of light. In this case, the boy's body cutting off the rays of sunlight, so that the space behind him is less directly illuminated than the rest of the ground. That is all."

The man nodded gently and smiled. "Yes," he said, "that is what Greer thought."

Beauty and Death Weave a Tapestry of Doom



There was a loud crash from behind the scenes

SHADOWS

In spite of my certainty that all this was the preliminary to a touch, I was interested.

"And who was Greer?" I asked.

"Is," the man corrected me. "Greer is still alive although it is only a matter of time until the—the shadow—drives him into death as it drove the Woman. Just a matter of time—"

His voice trailed off into an incoherent muttering, his eyes staring dully ahead of him. I turned about on the bench and, for the first time, really looked at him. This man couldn't have been more than 40 at the very most, yet his hair was snow white. The dead whiteness seen in very old men. Somehow I knew that he was *not* an ordinary bum making a touch. Or if it was a touch, he would make it worth while. I turned to him determinedly.

"Look here, I was just going to dinner. Why not come along with me and tell me about Greer and his shadow. I'll pay the check in return for the story. Is it a go?"

He nodded slowly. "Yes I'll tell you the story. I've got to tell somebody or I'll go mad. But I know that when you hear it, you will either call me a liar or say that I am mad. Still— Yes, I'll tell you about it."

WE rose and walked to a cheap restaurant, nearby, where my companion's clothing would not be too conspicuous. During the meal, I noticed that his table manners were beyond reproach and his speech was almost flawless. When we had finished eating, he accepted a cigarette and leaning back in his chair, began his story.

"Greer?" he began. "You wanted to know about Greer? Greer was an Englishman. A little, cockney rat who knew nothing and cared less as to the identity of his parents. In his babyhood he had been rented out to professional beggars and when he grew too old for that particular form of employment, he had been kicked about the slums of Whitechapel, living from day to

day, starving most of the time but always managing, somehow, to pull through.

"It was a wretched life for a boy to live but it did one thing that saved Greer from becoming an illiterate porter or a sneak thief. It developed a streak of fight in him. When, as a boy, the teamsters and navvies of Whitechapel kicked him into the gutter, he always rolled to his feet, spitting and snarling at them. He could not be made to cringe. Oh, there was nothing courageous about him. It was only the desperate savage cry of the rat, but it did some rather remarkable things for Greer. It gave him a start toward an education although his school-books were newspapers, salvaged from the gutters. It gave him a remarkable sharpness of wit, so that when he joined a wandering carnival, he rapidly forged ahead. Before he was thirty, Greer, the little cockney rat owned a small Variety hall down near the docks; his education was fair and he was looking forward to great things."

The shabby narrator passed his hand wearily across his brow. I passed my cigarette case to him and he went on with his story.

"Then Sarran came to his theatre. Sarran and the Woman.

"Greer had been away from the theatre for a month and when he returned an act was on. An act which the placards at each side of the stage announced as 'Sarran, the Master of Shadows.' He stood in the rear of the theatre for a moment to watch the act.

"A tall, gaunt man, dressed in the turban and robes of the East was standing in a strong spotlight. As he moved his body about, shadows sprang into being on the stage before him—shadows that moved and danced and leaped about in weird rhythm—shadows that joined hands and did fantastic dances—shadows that formed in columns and wove across the stage in solemn processional. A gong struck, and in a flash, the shadows had disappeared.

"A WOMAN leaped on to the stage where the shadows had played. A woman dressed in the trappings of a dancer of the East. Her throat and arms were covered with jewels and brazen plates covered her exquisitely formed young breasts. From her waist hung transparent crimson draperies. The rest of her slender, voluptuous body was bare, and Greer caught his breath sharply at the sensuous loveliness of her.

"The desire of a man for a woman is a strange thing. As the owner of a theatre, Greer had known many women, some of them remarkably beautiful, yet to none of them had he given more than a passing interest. Here was a woman he had never seen before and he knew, in a moment of time that he wanted her. He watched her eagerly as she came forward on the stage.

"FROM the orchestra came the shrill whining of a flute, playing a wailing song of the East. With a graceful waving of arms, the Woman began her dance of sensuous, weaving steps and graceful bending of her lovely body. As she danced a shadow stole up on the stage beside her. Then another and another, until there were scores of them, dancing around her, passing before and behind her, creeping up to her, caressing the warm ivory of her flesh. They seemed, at times, to melt into her very body. Greer saw her eyes as she turned and he could have sworn that she was angry or frightened. He could not tell which. At any rate she was obviously disturbed and once he saw her flinch when a shadow came close to her. He turned his eyes to look at Sarran.

"He was reaching through a net-work of metal supports to a small lever. A heavy cluster of lights was mounted on an intricate pattern of metal bars. The bars, Greer decided, obstructed the light and formed the shadows on the stage. The lights, with the mass of metal bars were mounted on a pole. As Sarran pulled back the lever, the whole heavy mass slowly slid down the pole. A fleeting thought struck Greer's mind that it was a bad arrangement, having to stoop down and reach through that net-work of bars to the lever. If the thing ever broke, the fellow wouldn't have a chance to draw back before the whole mess was on him. However, it was none of his affair, Greer thought, and returned his gaze to the dancer.

"As the lights slid down the pole, the shadows dancing with her sank down. Lower and lower they sank until they were crawling on the floor of the stage. As they sank down, the whirling steps of the dancer slowed until she was hardly moving. Lower and lower her lithe body drooped, until the last shadow disappeared. She bowed gracefully and the act was over.

"Greer hurried back-stage. He met Sarran and his partner at the door of their dressing rooms. To his surprise, the man

wore no make-up of any kind. The fellow *was* an Oriental, then. There was something in the strength of his features that was Occidental, but the sombre eyes were entirely of the East.

" 'Good act you've got there, old fellow,' he began. 'I'm Greer, owner of the house. Thought I'd say a word of greeting. Just got back from my vacation, you know.'

"He was aware of the extraordinarily silly sound of his speech as he stood before the gaunt, turbaned Oriental who regarded him so gravely. The latter bowed slightly.

" 'We thank you, sir.'

"Sarran's voice was in keeping with his appearance, deep and gravely intoned. Greer could think of no further sensible reply and to cover his confusion, he turned to the woman.

" 'I enjoyed your dance,' he said. 'You must have been dancing for many years?'

" 'All of my life, Tuan.'

" 'She was a temple dancer before—before she joined me,' Sarran explained.

" 'Well! That's interesting. Like to see more of you people while you're with us. Like to go over that act with you some time, too. I've never seen anything like the first part of it. I'd like to learn that trick where you made a shadow walk up before a strong light. That was really good.'

" 'I never explain my work.'

" 'Oh! I see. Well, that's all right. It's just a custom here to know how an act is worked so that if the performer is taken ill, we can rig up the act without him. You know how it is in places like these.'

" 'No one can do the things I do, sir!'

"The woman moved restlessly and Greer thought that she had shuddered at the last words. He had an odd feeling of incongruity, standing there. A slight, cheerful Britisher, dressed in tweeds, standing before this pair that might have stepped directly from the portals of an Eastern temple. He made a few more remarks and then walked away.

"BUT he did not put them out of his mind. He meant to know this woman better before she left—if she left—and the first thing to do was to find out all that was to be known about her and the man she worked with.

"Some of his performers had played in other houses with the two and they told him all they knew. It was not very much. As to Sarran, all that was known of him was that he had come from the East from somewhere around the Malay Archipelago. As to the woman, she was Sarran's chattel slave. She was a temple dancer who had been given to him—and given very humbly—as a gift from an Eastern chieftain not overly accustomed to giving gifts. And she was bound to her master by that strongest of all ties—fear. She firmly believed, as did her father who had given her to Sarran, that the Master of Shadows called upon the spirits of the dead to dance for him.

"GREER laughed when he heard of this belief, but to his surprise, his show-folk did not consider it a laughing matter. They did not profess to believe the many stories of the man's unholy power over shadows, but neither did they disbelieve. When Greer called them a lot of superstitious fools they merely told him to watch the act from the wings sometime.

"He did. He examined the simple equipment of the Master of Shadows and he, later, stood in the wings and watched him during a performance. He went away with an uncomfortable feeling. There are certain things which a shadow is not supposed to do and when a man makes a shadow do these things, it is not right. Not that he believed Sarran possessed some supernatural power. Not a bit of it. But he had to admit that it was very mystifying to a showman who knew every trick of the game.

"But Greer soon forgot his feeling of bewilderment in watching the Woman. Each day he stood in the wings as she danced and the sensual warmth of her body made him clasp and unclasp his fingers nervously. Each day when she left the stage, she flung him a taunting smile as though, knowing how much he wanted her, she would ask him why he did not take what he wanted. But, always, this smile was followed by a frightened, backward glance to see if Sarran had noticed. Before the week was over, he knew that he would have her no matter what the cost.

"The gutters of Whitechapel have their own moral code and they stamp that code indelibly on the child who is reared in them. They take away the artificial trimmings of civilization and leave him with the direct view-point of a jungle savage. Greer had an education and a passable imitation of culture but it was only a covering, a cloak. Underneath it was the savage Whitechapel rat with but one goal. His own desire; one curb, the fear of hurt. He had

seen a woman he wanted and he meant to have her. The moral side of it did not matter one way or the other.

"But, for a long time, he found no chance to see her alone. Always she was with her master and the two of them never mingled with the other players. When their time was up, Greer promptly booked them for two more weeks, paying them enough to enable them to cancel other bookings already made.

"THEN one day he saw the Master leave the theatre alone and, with his heart hammering like mad in his breast, he went into the Woman's dressing room.

"She was sitting upon a cushion on the floor and a shawl was wrapped about her, leaving one arm and shoulder bare. As Greer stood there, looking down at her, there was a hot, dry feeling in his mouth and his hands were clenched with the strength of his desire. She was staring at an angry, red mark on her shoulder. A mark that was patently the mark of a whip. Greer was not surprised. More than once he had heard through the thin walls of this room, a cold dispassionate voice followed by the sound of a slashing whip, then a frantic, helpless pleading in some Oriental tongue.

"'Beat you, eh?' Greer said. 'I'd leave the rotter if it was me. Let's see it.'

"As he bent over to examine the red mark, his hand touched her bare shoulder. A tingling current seemed to pass through his body. Suddenly he lifted her warm, beautiful body and held her in his arms, kissing her red mouth furiously as he had wanted to for many weeks. All the dreadful hurt of those years in Whitechapel and the driving toil of the years that followed, were forgotten in the ecstasy of those kisses. When Greer drew back his head to look at her, the Woman was lying in his arms, unresistingly, a little smile of triumph on her lips.

"'Why don't you leave that rotter?' he demanded thickly. 'I'll see that he don't bother you. Why don't you? You know I'm crazy about you. You could have jewels —fine clothes—everything. Why not?'

"The Woman shuddered and drew her shawl closer, as if a cold draft had touched her.

"'Do not speak such words, Tuan. You do not know; you are of the West. I am of the East; I *know!* It is not good to anger those who make the spirits of the dead to dance for them. No, Tuan, as long as he is alive, I will never dare to leave him. If he were dead—if I could see him dead with my own eyes—I do not know—'

"She was staring straight ahead of her, her eyes filled with the mysticism of the East. When Greer tried to kiss her again, she pushed him away with the excuse that Sarran would be returning soon. He left but he knew that sometime he would kill her master if there were no other way to obtain this woman.

"And, as the days passed by, it became increasingly apparent that there would be no other way. Even if she were to leave Sarran, Greer asked himself, what would be the use of having her, only to die with a knife in his back, a few days later? No, he must make up his mind to do away with the Master or give up the Woman. And his mind was too filled with the desire for her to do that. The day soon come when Greer was finished with indecision. The Master of Shadows must leave the stage—forever.

"Having made up his mind that murder was worth the danger it would entail, Greer wasted no time in bitter self-reproachings or mental wringing of hands. His was the moral code of Whitechapel gutters. He wanted a woman badly enough to kill a man to obtain her. Very well, then the only thing left was to find the best way to kill. The way which was least likely to cause him to pay the penalty for that killing.

"HE soon found the way. He remembered the heavy mass of metal bars and the cluster of lights used in the finale of Sarran's act. There was a bolt which, if loosened, would send the whole, heavy mass crashing down, the first time it was moved. It was the perfect way, the way which Greer finally selected after he had systematically considered and rejected many plans. It was almost certain to fall right and there was little chance of detection. Once he had formed his plan, he wasted no further time. The next morning, he walked onto the deserted stage and searched about until he found a pair of gloves which an electrician had left. He did not expect an investigation, beyond the perfunctory one which the insurance company would make, but he must not take even the very slight chance of fingerprints being found. Putting on the gloves, he loosened the bolt until it hung by a thread, then replaced the gloves and walked away. Sarran would stoop down, reach through the net-work of

bars, pull back the lever to lower the lights and the whole thing would fall upon him. There would be no time for him to draw back to escape. And there would be no evidence to point to murder. Just a bolt that had worked loose; that was all.

"As the time for the next performance of the Master of Shadows drew near, Greer was surprised to find his nerves actually becoming steadier. He walked about, quite naturally, back-stage, giving orders for the placing of a new spotlight. When the finale of Sarran's act drew near, he was standing in the wings, facing the stage talking to the stage manager.

"The Woman came onto the stage and Greer talked calmly of amber frames while he watched her voluptuous body weaving out its tale of rapture and allure. The myriad shadows were whirling like mad about her. In a few minutes more. . . . Ah!

"Sarran was stooping down to reach the lever which would lower the cluster of lights. Turning his back to the stage, Greer began showing the stage manager some notes he had made for a new setting. Forced himself to speak calmly of borders and screens while his nerves were doing a mad tattoo and something in the back of his brain was shrieking: '. . . Now he's reaching through the supports. . . . Now he's grasping the lever. . . . Is that bolt loosed enough?. . . . Is it possible that he's looked over the thing already . . . is. . . .'

"There was a loud crash from behind the scenes. It was followed by the quick intake of breath which, from an audience, denotes that they are not yet sure whether it is an accident or merely a thrilling part of the act. Greer wheeled about.

"SARRAN was pinned to the mass of wreckage, struggling feebly. In the center of the stage, the Woman was standing motionless, arrested in the middle of a movement—like a statue. Of course, it was only his fancy, but, for that first moment Greer imagined that the shadows surrounding her had stayed on the stage an instant after the lights had fallen. It seemed to him that they had stopped their weird dance and had come forward to stand beside the Woman and peer at the writhing man. This was, as Greer knew very well, a mere figment of his over-wrought nerves for, of course, the shadows had died when the lights had fallen.

"When Greer reached the wreckage, men were crowded about, frantically trying to lift the heavy mass. Everyone was shouting and getting in everyone else's way. Out in the audience, some fool woman was screaming at the top of her voice. She was screaming monotonously in the same key, and her monotonous screams worried Greer. Quickly he signalled the curtain to be lowered and sent the almost hysterical stage manager out front to soothe the panic stricken audience.

"THE Master of Shadows had not been instantly killed by the blow. His back was terribly mangled and it was obviously a matter of a few minutes at most, but he was not yet dead. As Greer rushed up, the dark, Oriental eyes turned to him and, in a flash, the agony in them was turned to hate. Sarran knew his murderer and Greer was aware of it. Frantically he tried to think of some plan to stop the fellow if he tried to accuse him before he died. But Sarran only nodded his head weakly, signaling the other to come closer. As Greer bent over him, the Oriental gasped weakly.

" 'You have won—for a little while. But you will regret your victory—they—they—will stay behind—to avenge me. And when they drive you—to me—out there—you will repay—the—'

"His voice trailed off into a choking gasp and he died in Greer's arms. As the little cockney rose to his feet a shadow seemed to rise from the dead man to stand beside him, where his own shadow had been. Or, rather, where his own shadow was, for it was, of course, but another delusion, born of his taut nerves. But a cold wave struck the little cockney, seeming to pervade his whole body and he shivered as he turned away. The Woman was standing beside him as he rose, looking down upon the dead man who had been her master.

" 'Did you see it too, Tuan?' she asked. Greer swore and hurried off to see what was keeping the doctor someone had called. . . .

"That night he called upon the Woman to find out her plans for the future. Strangely enough, they both elected to treat the matter as an accident; to ignore all that had gone before. The Woman knew that Greer had murdered her master to obtain her and Greer knew that she knew it, but both of them preferred to keep the mask raised. Perhaps it was because neither of them trusted the other very much. Greer offered his condolences and the Woman accepted them with a face that was a blank,

Oriental masque. At the close of the interview, he gave her a large roll of bills and told her that he had arranged for her to stay with a friend of his, 'until she knew what she was going to do.' The Woman took the money and bowed. She came of a race of women which had, for generations untold, bowed their heads in submission to the commands of man.

"BEFORE a month had passed, Greer was married to her."

My shabby companion paused and shifted wearily in his seat. I motioned to the waiter to bring more coffee and presently he went on with his tale:

"During the next few weeks, the little Englishman reached the zenith of his whole life. He had a prosperous business, a woman whom he loved and his health was good. What more could a man ask of the gods? His conscience? He was a product of the Whitechapel gutters, remember. He had wanted a thing and he had taken it. To him it was, underneath the thin coating of education and culture, a perfectly natural thing. In a few weeks he found himself going for days at a time without thinking of the murdered man, at all. As for the Woman, if she regretted anything, it was not apparent. Only once did she give any sign of remembering the murder. Somehow Greer had happened to mention the quotation, 'Dead men tell no tales!' He stopped short, looking at her to see if she had caught the connection. She drew in her breath sharply, then shrugged her shoulders with the fatalism of the East. 'What is to be, will be,' she said quietly.

"Neither of them could have told just when it was that the shadows began to act strangely.

"It was almost unnoticeable at first. Merely that their own shadows and the shadows of things around them did not behave exactly as shadows should behave. Mere trifles. Standing before a window, their shadows seemed to edge around them a bit, as though to stand beside them. Or the shadow of a stationary object seemed to be moving. Mere trifles. When they looked closely, the shadows were as they should be, and they laughed at their absurd fancies—at least Greer laughed. The Woman only turned away. No, there was nothing really wrong, but the constant tenacity of the suggestions began to tell upon Greer's nerves. Too, he began to have an odd fancy. The idea that the shadow cast by his body was not his own. Sometimes in the morning, when he walked toward the East, he would stop and turn back to look at the shadow behind him. Then he had an odd feeling that the shadow was that of a man in a turban instead of a man wearing a hat. Then he would curse himself for a silly, imaginative fool and walk on.

"Soon, Greer was drinking a little, just a very little, more than was his custom. He had always been a steady, though light, drinker. Two or three whiskeys a day and no more had always been a part of his regular life. And now he began to increase his customary allotment; to take one, two, and, sometimes, three more than usual. The shadows did not behave so erratically when he took an extra drink. He tried to induce the Woman to drink with him but she only shook her head silently. Once he snarled at her for 'letting a lot of blasted shadows get you.' She looked at him stolidly for a moment then turned away repeating her former remark, 'What is to be will be.' But there was a note of stony dreariness in her voice that terrified Greer nearly as much as the shadows. That day he drank until he became almost stupefied.

"When it finally dawned on Greer that the shadows were driving him to drink too much, the rat-like fighting spirit, born of Whitechapel gutters, asserted itself. For one whole week he did not take a drink.

"It was not a pleasant week. Constantly the shadows mocked him, darting gray shapes that seemed to move independently of light. Dim shapes stood before him leering at him. Shapes that were not banished by the strongest lights. For nights, he could not sleep and ghastly shapes danced upon his coverlet. Days, when he stepped out on the street a turbaned shadow walked behind him where his own shadow should have been.

"AT the end of a week Greer gave up the fight against his tortured nerves and went back to drinking.

"He seldom saw the Woman now; the very sight of her was distasteful. When he did see her, she was always sitting upon a cushion on the floor, staring dully ahead of her, nodding to herself. Greer would curse her and then leave the room.

"As the week of nightmare crept by, Greer sank steadily into a drink-induced coma. For days at a time, he did not leave his lodgings. There was a fairly

competent manager who carried on his business and he sat all day in a darkened room, drinking steadily, watching gray shapes wheel and dart about him, while a larger shadow—a shadow that wore a turban—sat upon the arm of his chair and watched the shadows as a dark emperor from the Pit might sit and watch the play of lesser imps. Greer did not mind the shadows so much when he was very drunk, and he was never sober now. Lower and lower, he sank, into a world that had no time, that had nothing but the mocking shadows and the partial relief which alcohol gave. Hours grew into days, days into weeks. . . .

"One day the turbaned shadow that had sat beside him rose. Sternly stood before him and the lesser shadows shrank back—waiting.

"Slowly, imperiously the shadow beckoned to Greer. Drunkenly, the man lurched to his feet. He must have been a wretched sight. Drunk for weeks, his hair and beard were a filthy, tangled mat, his eyes bloodshot and glaring wildly. But the traits of a whole lifetime are hard to erase, even by a terrific strain such as Greer had undergone. There was still something left of the unconquerable, rat-like savagery of the Whitechapel brat. He cursed as he rose and followed the beckoning shadow into the next room.

"The Woman was there as he followed the shadow in. She was sitting upon a cushion on the floor, just as he had seen her last, and Greer was horrified at the story of battle written upon her face. In those few weeks, she had aged years.

"She was sitting there, holding a tall, silver bottle in her hands, staring drearily ahead of her—as if waiting. As he watched her sitting there, Greer felt a tremor of the old love he had had for her—a love that was mellowed by pity now. He stumbled forward toward her.

"'WHAT's the matter, Girl?' he asked kindly. 'Have those damned shadows got you, too? Never mind, we'll beat them yet. Come on, let's pull ourselves together. Take a bath, get cleaned up and get out into the open. We'll beat that damned guy yet.'

"She did not answer and he started forward to shake her by the shoulder. Instantly the shadow stepped before him, barring his way. With a savage oath, Greer struck at the shadow. Struck at it as he would strike at a man in his way.

"Instantly the shadow closed with him and Greer felt the cold chill of the charnel house in his bones. His body went limp with the horror of that clammy cold that seemed to permeate his whole being. He stopped. He could no more have gone forward then than he could have conquered the rigid hold of an electric current.

"When he stopped, the shadow moved away from him to stand before the Woman. Sternly the grey finger pointed to the silver bottle in her hand. The Woman bowed her head in a deep salaam. Almost with relief, Greer thought. Like one who had waited for a summons and was glad that the waiting was over. She raised the silver bottle in a farewell gesture to Greer, then drank.

"SICK with horror, unable to move to aid her, Greer watched her die. Then he turned and fled out of the room.

"He had a confused memory of rushing hatless and unshaven into the almost deserted street. Of fleeing for hours. Fleeing from a turbaned shadow that raced beside him and mocked him as he fled. It was nearly dawn when he returned to his lodgings. Carefully avoiding the room where lay the dead body of the Woman, he made hurried preparations. He bathed, shaved and packed a few of his most essential belongings. As he started to slip out again, the thought occurred to him that, no matter what the cost, he ought not to leave her dead body lying there on the cold, wooden floor.

"By a supreme effort, he mastered his horror long enough to open the door of that room and peer in. She was lying there, sprawled upon the floor and above her body the little, grey shadows were doing a *Danse Macabre*. Greer had a fleeting vision of them. Thousands of them, capering about on her body like fiends from hell. Marching across her breast in a mock parade. Flicking themselves across her smooth throat. Profaning the flesh he had loved so much.

"Greer screamed and fled out into the grey dawn."

The shabby, little man snuffed out the stump of his cigarette upon his saucer. His voice had grown hoarse with the lengthy strain of telling his story.

"And then what happened to Greer?" I asked.

"Why, nothing has happened to him—yet. Though it is, of course, only a matter

of a short time until it will happen. After he fled from the room where the body of the Woman lay sprawled in death, he went directly to his attorneys. In a few hours, he had sold his theatre, taking what he could get for it. Then he started a futile, heartbreaking trek across the earth. Europe. Asia. Then back across the ocean to America. Always fleeing from a turbaned shadow that raced at his side and mocked his puny flight. A shadow that gave him no rest by day or by night. A shadow that never will give him rest until he is driven to take the way the Woman took. And then—? Who knows? Perhaps she was right when she said, 'What is to be will be.'"

THE waiters were turning out the lights, preparing to close the place for the night. When we went out, I stood in the doorway and watched the little man as he walked down the street. At the next corner he started to cross over. A huge truck rumbled by and he drew back to wait until it had passed. Suddenly the little man gave a convulsive leap. There was a sound of screaming brakes from the truck and he seemed to shoot straight up in the air.

I started running toward the scene but a policeman was there before me. The man had been killed instantly by the terrific impact of the truck. The policeman, going through his pockets, soon found an old letter that gave him the identification he sought.

"H'm, the name is hard to make out. It's a pretty old letter. Seems like it's Green—Gre—Oh, I see now. It's Greer. L. H. Greer. London, England. You don't know him do you, mister?"

I looked down at the dead man. Death had given him a strange dignity which he had probably never had in life, even at his best. The grimy, drink-blotched features seemed composed now. As I looked at him—it was, of course, a mere delusion born of the horror of seeing the dead body of a man who had talked to me a few minutes before, but—well, I thought I saw a dim shadow hovering above the dead body of the shabby, little man. A shadow that wore a turban and looked at me as though waiting my answer. I seemed to see the thin hands spread in a gesture of Eastern fatalism. As if to say, "What is to be will be."

"No," I said to the policeman, "I don't know him."

Then I walked away.

A meeting of the local wizards and witches was in progress. Braun was reading out of a book—

The Devil Doctor of New York

A young scion of Pennsylvania Hex Murderers carries their fiend formula to the Metropolis

By W. ADOLPHE ROBERTS

PAUL DELIUS came out of the little century-old farmhouse of his ancestors in York County, Pennsylvania. He crossed the littered backyard where a pig and a few rusty chickens were the only signs that the place indeed functioned as a farm, plunged into the tall, wet grass of the field beyond and advanced as far as a mouldering fence that ran alongside a brook. Paul leaned on a post, and gazed at as desolate a scene as it would have been possible to find in the whole United States.

It was late afternoon, late autumn, late everything, in that section of Old Dutchland, as the five counties of which York was the central one were called. Culturally, the region was generations behind the times. A steady moisture dripped from the skies, half rain, half fog. But through the bluish mist, Paul could see across the brook and into the straggling churchyard that occupied the farther bank.

They were holding a funeral there. Grandma Kate Schneider was being buried, and abundant cause existed for the heavy-hearted young watcher to believe that she had been murdered by his own uncle. The community, at all events, had growled under its breath for several days that Heinrich Delius and three or four others were probably to blame. It was whispered that these suspects were hex-doctors, or wizards; that they had taken money from the conscienceless Schneider heirs to work certain magic charms which had brought about the death of the woman. The accusation would have seemed fantastic nonsense to an outsider. But Paul Delius was the last person who could afford to treat it lightly. He had been reared within the inner circles of Pennsylvania Dutch witchcraft.

The melancholy *ding-dong, ding-dong* of the church bell racked his nerves. It was a Lutheran church, the only place of worship

in the township of New Bremen, on the edge of which the Delius farm was located. Paul remembered that the pastor, the Reverend Karl Steiner, had been especially severe in condemning the hex practises, yet had never seemed to doubt their grim effectiveness. He shivered. Horrible to think that on this side of the brook were hatched the plots that filled graves only a stone's throw distant.

HE could see the coffin being carried out of the church now. About a dozen black-garbed figures of men and women accompanied it. They looked like ravens stalking in a damp furrow. Some of them glanced sideways and observed him. Though they were too far off for him to note the expressions on their faces, he sensed their hostility. He did not retreat, but merely lowered his head, ceased to watch the funeral and mulled over his personal problems.

Paul was nearly twenty-one years old. The next day would be his birthday. His parents had both died when he was a child, leaving him nothing but petty debts, which his uncle Heinrich had paid in order to come into possession of this farm. Old Heinrich had brought him up in a curious fashion, sending him to grammar school as a bare concession to the law, but refusing to let him attend high school and personally completing his education from a few musty old German books that lay around the house. Paul had realized before he was sixteen that these books were intended to prepare him for the mysteries of witchcraft. They purported to teach history and religion, but they were written from the viewpoint of a fanatical mysticism in which it was hard to find a meaning. Chief among them was the *Himmelsbrief,* or "Heavenly Letter," which warned the reader against dealing with Satan and his friends, yet covertly gave instructions as to how this might be accomplished.

Paul knew that the three men and two women, all of them old, who often visited his uncle, were active practitioners of the black arts. Their names were Max Klempert, Ludwig Braun, Walter Lesser, Elizabeth Kleinschmidt and Martha Schultz. They were versed not only in the *Himmelsbrief,* but in *The Long Lost Friends,* a mysterious pamphlet printed in English which he had never been allowed to read. From time to time, this group of ancients held secret meetings in each other's houses. He had been excluded from such gatherings, but it would not be for much longer now. Only the week before, Uncle Heinrich had told him that on his twenty-first birthday he was to receive full initiation into their cult.

A cold shudder ran though the young fellow's body. He had an instinctive aversion for the whole business. To be forced to become a hex-doctor appeared the most horrible thing that Fate could have in store for him. He had known of too many crimes which had been committed by means of witchcraft. Not always murder; generally, in fact, nothing so heinous as that. But the extorting of blackmail from superstitious people who had been terrified by the spells cast upon them! The prescribing of vile nostrums for the sick, who were killed instead of cured by them! Surely such practises were bad enough, and offered no career to a youth with aspirations toward making a name for himself in the world.

Paul feared and loathed each one of the cabal of old wizards and witches. He would have found it hard to say which he considered the worst of the lot; his uncle, perhaps, or it might be Ludwig Braun with his wrinkled bald head that reminded him of that of a turkey buzzard. He felt a grudging, faint sympathy, however, for Walter Lesser. The man was so silent and gloomy. He seemed a passive agent among the rest. And Paul could not forget that he was the grandfather of Gertrude Lesser, lovely, blue-eyed Gertrude who had vanished from New Bremen six years earlier in circumstances that were still to be explained.

LIKE Paul himself, Gertrude had lost her father and mother and had had a solitary childhood in her grandfather's home. He and she had been playmates. He had loved her, or thought that he did. Puppy love, maybe; but it had been very real and beautiful to him. Then, when they were both scarcely fifteen years old, the incredible disappearance of the girl had taken place. She had simply dropped out of the world, as far as New Bremen was concerned. The common gossip was, that tramps had kidnapped her. Old Lesser had expressed no opinions about the matter. He had insisted that he did not know where the girl was, but some persons thought that he had sent Gertrude to live with distant relatives and did not choose to give an accounting.

Sighing fretfully, Paul Delius raised his head for the first time in half an hour. The funeral in the churchyard was over. It had grown much darker, but he could vaguely distinguish the mound that had been raised over Grandma Schneider's grave. The last of the grave-diggers were just going through the far gate that opened on to the main street of the village. Paul was about to turn back to the house when he caught sight of a crouching figure that was moving stealthily among the tombs. It hopped and scurried from one place of vantage to another, hiding behind some especially large cross for a moment before it resumed its mysterious course. It seemed fearful of discovery from the direction of the church, but did not glance toward the brook.

Astonished at this procedure, Paul watched intently. He soon realized with dismay that the prowler was headed for the new Schneider grave. What did it want there? Surely nothing had been left around that would tempt a thief! The next moment, he observed the odd figure stooping over the mound and clawing up handfulls of earth which it stuffed into the side pockets of a shabby black coat. The work was done quickly. Then, his body still bent almost double, the man whom Paul now recognized as being old Ludwig Braun dodged sideways and scuttled down the slope with the clear intention of crossing the brook.

PAUL did not leave the spot where he was standing, but adjusted his body a trifle so that it was screened by the fence. The gathering dusk made it unlikely that Braun would notice him unless he passed within a few feet of the post. The young man had a sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach. He knew the motives behind Braun's actions in the cemetery. He had been taking earth from a fresh grave in order to use it in some horrible ritual of the hex cult. For certain demoniac purposes, the wizards stole grave dirt at midnight when the moon was full; but for others they thought it important to get hold of the earth as soon as possible after the body had been buried. Paul was sufficiently familiar with their books to be aware of the distinction. Yet, until he had identified Braun, his mind had revolted from the suggestion that the creature prowling in the churchyard had been bent on any such errand. It was impossible to doubt it now.

Braun scrambled across the brook, and as soon as he was safely on the Delius farm he stood erect, his vulture-like head thrown back between his shoulders and his arms flapping to restore the circulation in his aged body. He did not see Paul, and presently he commenced to shamble straight towards the farmhouse. The young man allowed him to gain a lead of about thirty yards, and then followed slowly. It was nearly supper time, but he had no desire for food—not, at any rate, if he would have to eat it at the same table with Uncle Heinrich and Ludwig Braun. Those two probably had some deviltry on foot for the evening, in which case the other members of the cabal might be expected to arrive shortly. Paul was sick to death of the routine of such occasions: the crudely-cooked meal of coarse food, through which he would sit without uttering a word, while the dreadful old people talked over his head in cryptic language; the final dismissal to the garret, where his bedroom door would be locked from the outside, so that they might be free to conduct their secret rites downstairs.

AND things would perhaps be even worse this evening. He was on the verge of twenty-one, the age at which he, too, was to be initiated. They might decide to take him into their councils tonight. He wanted none of it.

Paul made his way to the barn, a large, ramshackle building, three-quarters empty. One cow and two horses had stalls there, and a little hay to feed them had been stored in the loft. This was typical of the rundown condition of the farm. Heinrich Delius obtained a living from other sources than live stock and agriculture. But Paul had put away a couple of barrels of apples, which otherwise would have been allowed to rot on the ground. He filled his pockets with the fruit, climbed to the loft and made his supper off apples, while he lolled on a stack of hay beside a window. His absence would not disturb Uncle Heinrich in the least, he knew; for Paul was in the habit of roving about the countryside at all hours, and the old man himself followed no schedule in his housekeeping.

Shortly after he had finished eating, Paul fell into a troubled doze. He came awake with a start to find that it was pitch dark and the evening well advanced. But directly opposite to where he was sitting, the parlor of the farmhouse was ablaze with light. The lower halves of its two windows

were shuttered, yet above the shutters the shades were up and there was an unobstructed view into the room. If he had chosen his position for the express purpose of spying, he could not have found a better spot. For a moment, he wondered why his uncle should have been so careless. Then he remembered that for some hex ceremonies it was thought necessary that the stars should be visible.

A MEETING of the local wizards and witches was indeed in progress. He could see all the prominent members of the group, except Walter Lesser. Braun and Klempert were there, the Kleinschmidt and Schultz women, and of course his Uncle Heinrich. They were seated around the parlor table. Braun was reading out of a book, but at that distance no sounds could be heard issuing from his lips. In the middle of the table stood a small object, surrounded by a ring of dark-colored stuff which the lad felt sure was the earth taken from Grandma Schneider's grave.

He threw himself away from the window, and buried his face in the hay. On whom were those fiends now trying to cast a spell? he asked himself. His disgust matured to the point of making him want to flee from New Bremen, so that he should never again hear of the foul villainies of witchcraft. The time was to come when he would wish that he had observed longer and more carefully what was going on in the farmhouse. But at the moment it seemed to be merely repellent mumbo-jumbo that did not concern him personally.

When he again looked out, the parlor lights had been extinguished and the whole house had the air of being deserted. Uncle Heinrich usually was in bed and sound asleep within ten minutes after a meeting had been disbanded. He could be assumed to have followed the same course tonight.

Paul arose wearily, descended to the yard and made his way to the back of the farmhouse. He passed through a door that was fastened only with a latch, and found himself in the wide hallway from which the stairs mounted to the upper story. His sole idea had been to slip quietly to his bedroom and go to sleep. But as he paused outside the door of the parlor, he was shaken by a sudden fit of anger. He wanted to see what traces of their work the hex-doctors had left behind them, and for the first time since he had known of these occurrences he ventured to try the handle of the closed door. The latter proved to be locked.

Dropping to his knees, he took a penknife from his pocket and picked at the lock, which was of an ancient model and easily manipulated. In a few minutes, Paul had it open. He felt his way through the darkness until he reached the table, and then he struck a match. The ring of heaped earth still lay on the board, and in the middle of the circle thus created there stood the small wax image of a man with pins thrust into it from many angles. This was the object which he had seen from the barn window without being able to tell what it was.

The magic involved was quite familiar to the lad. By making an effigy of a living person and then mutilating it, while a mystic ritual was performed, the wizards expected to cause the death of that person. The more accurate the portrait in wax, the better the spell was supposed to work.

Paul held the match close to the image, but the expiring flame burned his fingers. He lit another match, and was shocked to learn that the gruesome statuette could be easily identified. It represented Walter Lesser, with his high forehead, forked white beard and rounded shoulders. Strands of wool had been used for the beard, a trifle absurdly; but on the whole the thing was smoothly modeled.

"They are turning against one of their own number, now!" Paul whispered to himself. "Why in God's name should they do that?"

HIS distaste and wrath changed to a kind of terror. He only partly believed that any physical harm could come to Lesser because of this maneuver. It did not occur to him to warn the old man, who was presumably able to protect himself against malignant spells. But Paul was frightened on his own account. He wished to be out of the reach of this circle, whose members were capable of betraying each other. The peril of being forced to join them tomorrow, on his birthday, became intolerable.

With as little noise as possible, he closed the parlor door and stole upstairs. He packed an old leather grip, putting in a change of clothes, a few toilet articles and some books he took at random from a shelf. Hidden in his bureau drawer were small bills and coins amounting to about thirty dollars, his earnings from odd jobs done in the past year. He pocketed the money. Then,

It was a grotesque wrangle. Between the blustering and whining the place was a bedlam. The partners turned toward Paul

to the accompaniment of his uncle's snores, he slipped away and out of the house. Walking rapidly to the nearest State road, he turned his back for ever, as he thought, upon the community of New Bremen and all its works.

Shortly after dawn the following morning, Paul reached the nearest railroad junction and bought a ticket to New York City. He had made short train journeys before, but had never been even as far as Philadelphia. His conception of big towns was based upon the inferior and out-dated movies which were shown in the village picture houses. Sitting by the car window, he watched the landscape rush by, and he tried to imagine what sort of life it was into which he was plunging. How would he get a job? And at doing what? He was without technical training of any kind. Yet a youthful confidence possessed his heart. It did not seem possible that a healthy and willing lad could fail to earn his salt in New York.

AT Philadelphia, he thought of stopping over for a few hours to see the sights. But the great railroad terminal and the hurrying crowds bewildered him. He feared to get lost in the streets, and he had an exaggerated idea of what it would cost him for meals and trolley fares. So he breakfasted off a sandwich bought at the coffee counter in the station, and transferred to the noon express to New York.

Precisely at two o'clock, he was cast

adrift in the infinitely vaster Pennsylvania Terminal, at the heart of Manhattan. He wandered uncertainly through its mazes, awed by the long reaches of its corridors and the high, vaulted glass roof through which the autumn light came wanly. In his right hand, he clutched his shabby grip. Red-caps tried to take it away from him, jabbering suggestions which he did not understand, but he hung on to it the more tightly and shook his head. A representative of a travelers' aid society asked him whether he needed guidance. With typical rustic suspicion, he feared that this might be a trap and answered that he knew where he was going. His firm voice deterred the man from pressing the point, and he was left alone.

PAUL eventually reached the street. He was stunned by the tangle of automobiles on Seventh Avenue; they were running north in such numbers that their very wheels appeared to be interlocked. But mysteriously, to him, the traffic suddenly halted and the road was clear. He crossed the Avenue, went up to a policeman and asked where he could rent a room. The officer pointed over his shoulder at a hotel that towered some forty stories into the sky. Paul took one look at its ornate entrance, and said timidly:

"I don't have much money. I must go to a cheap place."

"How cheap?" smiled the other. "What do you expect to pay?"

"I—I don't know the prices here. Perhaps a dollar a week."

"It can't be done, me boy. You'll be lucky to find a room for five dollars."

Paul's heart sank. He had about twenty dollars left, and it terrified him to think that he would have to lay out a full quarter of that sum for a room. He remained silent. The policeman wagged his head and remarked, not unsympathetically:

"I wish I could help you, but I can't leave my post. Walk down this avenue until you come to the streets that are named in the Twenties. Then turn West—to the right—for a few blocks. You can rent rooms over there pretty reasonably."

So it occurred that Paul Delius drifted to the old Chelsea neighborhood, and took a hall bedroom in West Twenty-eighth Street, between Eight and Ninth Avenues, for which he paid four dollars and seventy-five cents in advance.

It was a tiny cubicle, furnished with a cot, a bureau and washstand combined, a ricketty table and a chair. The lodger had no choice but to hang his clothes on hooks behind the door. A single window opened on a backyard, where a couple of trees raised bare branches like skeleton arms. The location was the top floor of the house.

Paul emptied his bag, and distributed his scant belongings here and there. As he set up his books on the table, he noticed that he had brought, without intending to do so, a crudely-printed, paper-bound volume on the subject of witchcraft. It was cryptically entitled *The Guide to Endor,* and was the property of his Uncle Heinrich. Paul's first impulse was to throw it out of the window, but he changed his mind. In days to come, he might value it as a curiosity, he reflected.

Utterly lonely and homesick in spite of himself, though he had never felt that the farm at New Bremen was a real home, he lay on the bed and strove to adjust his mood to the atmosphere of the city. He had visions of going out that same afternoon to look for work. But he was hungry, and he had had no sleep the night before. He drowsed for an hour or two. Then he wandered outdoors, and after infinite hesitations he chose a restaurant which he thought might be inexpensive. The check was for a dollar, and it threw him into a panic. At this rate, he imagined he would be penniless in a fortnight. He could waste no time about landing a job.

Dusk had now fallen, however, and Paul knew that most places of business were closed. He crept back to his room, and immediately went to bed. The heavy slumber into which he sank lasted until eight o'clock in the morning.

AS he tied his cravat in front of the cracked mirror above the washstand, Paul half-unconsciously studied his own face to see whether it suggested a personality that might hope to win success. He perceived that he looked young for his age, that he was German and blond in type, with wavy yellow hair, a broad forehead, blue eyes and a nondescript but clean-cut nose, mouth and chin. He was of average height and had a strong, well-formed body due to his boyhood in the open. "Not so bad," he told himself. "Strangers shouldn't put me down as being either a boob or a loafer."

But he failed to take account of the fact that his clothes were countrified. He was wearing an unpressed suit which had had

no pretentions to smartness in the first place. Clothes had always been a negligible factor in the life of Paul Delius.

He had observed in the movies that people hunting for jobs consulted the Want Advertisement pages of newspapers. So on his way to breakfast he bought a paper, which he laboriously examined while he ate coffee-cake and drank milk. He cut out a large number of ads announcing vacancies for clerks, office boys and salesmen. Just how one learned to be a salesman, he did not know. He imagined that the term applied to those who served customers over the counter, as well as to traveling drummers. Probably he was too inexperienced to be sent on the road, he thought; but shops were always being forced to break in new help. The stores in New Bremen, at any rate, were in that predicament. Paul felt quite hopeful about becoming a salesman.

When he actually started to make the rounds, he discovered that New York was a much larger city that he had dreamed. His addresses were so widely scattered that it took him the whole morning to find his way to three of them. At each place, long waiting lines of applicants were ahead of him, and his confidence ebbed. Yet he stuck to it until he reached the various employment men. They barely glanced at him, and told him that the vacancy had been filled.

In the afternoon, he had better fortune in some offices where boys were wanted. But after they had listened to his statement that he was willing to learn no matter what business and would begin at the bottom, the prospective employers glanced at him curiously.

"You are too old to be an office boy," one of them said.

Another remarked: "You should look for outdoor work. A fellow who has been reared on a farm would find it difficult to stand the confinement here."

NOBODY cared to inform him that his clothes gave him the appearance of a greenhorn, and that New York does not have the time to teach self-confessed farm lads the routine of business in the great city. A few muttered something about his lack of experience. They shrugged their shoulders when he asked logically whether every man did not have to find a place in which to begin. They preferred that he should gain his experience elsewhere.

Paul met with similar discouragements at every turn during the next two days. It seemed impossible to persuade any one even to employ him on a week's trial. Yet he realized that the newspapers printed hundreds of fresh advertisements each morning, and that sooner or later his particular niche should reveal itself.

HE was especially chagrined at being turned away from a certain office on Fifth Avenue near Forty-second Street. The firm dealt in goods imported from the Orient—rugs, carved furniture, metal utensils, vases and bric-a-brac, for the most part. It had advertised for a general stock clerk, with the specific statement that because the salary was low a youth without training would be acceptable. The moment Paul saw the objects on display, he was stirred by a passionate desire to work among them. The place struck him as being a fairyland. It was his first contact with Oriental things, but he felt a strange affinity for them. He would have given a year of his life for the privilege of having these gorgeous teak-wood tables and richly-colored rugs continuously under his eyes.

The employment agent, whose name was George Webster, received him in his private office and questioned him with more than the usual show of interest. He asked him where he had gone to school and wanted to know how he had succeeded in breaking away from the farm in Pennsylvania. But there was an odd glint in Webster's eyes, as he spoke, and he looked Paul over from head to foot. He evidently found the latter's censored version of his escape a trifle humorous.

Unsophisticated as the boy was, he became aware before long that the other was making fun of him. He flushed and stammered. He saw no reason why he should be treated in that way.

"You—you said in the paper that you'd take a beginner. I'm the one for you. I'm husky enough to shift this furniture around, I guess, and I'll work for any wages you want to pay me," he challenged, with a touch of anger.

Webster covered his mouth with his hand, to hide a grin. "The duties of this job aren't confined to furniture moving. I'm afraid you won't do. There are several other applicants. But I'll put your address on file. If anything else turns up and I think I can use you, I'll let you know."

So Paul walked from the office and into the street, his heart heavy with worry about

the future. The weather was bleak and gray, late autumn in the city at its worst. He passed the Public Library and came to the elevated station at Sixth Avenue. A large newspaper stand a bit to the left of the regular one held his attention. It bore a sign announcing that it carried papers from all parts of the United States. "Read the News from Your Home Town, and Keep in Touch with the Folks," it urged. The suggestion appealed to Paul. He searched until he found a journal from Lancaster, the nearest large town to New Bremen. Instantly, his eye was caught by a headline on the front page, proclaiming a crime which the New York City papers had either ignored or relegated to an obscure paragraph. He read:

GRUESOME MURDER IN YORK CO.

Aged Resident of New Bremen Discovered with Head Crushed on Lone Farm

State Police Cast Wide Net for Slayer of Walter Lesser

THE blood leaped to Paul's head and pounded there. In the first moment of horror, he did not stop to think that the killing might have anything to do with the scene he had witnessed just prior to his own flight. "Lesser *murdered!*" he breathed, conscious only of the fact that he had liked the old man better than the others of his group. And, indeed, the newspaper story made it appear that this crime had been crudely committed by thugs, with robbery as its motive.

"Yesterday afternoon, the neighbors observed that no smoke had come all day from the chimney of the farm, on the outskirts of New Bremen, where Walter Lesser lived by himself," the paper stated. "David Schmidt and his wife, Hilda, decided to call and see whether the old man was ill. They found the living room to be a shambles. The body of Lesser lay across a box of kindling wood beside the fireplace, his head crushed by repeated blows of a hatchet. The weapon, which is said to have belonged to him, was located under a chair. He had evidently put up a stiff fight, for the furniture had been knocked about and there were muddy footprints all over the floor. His watch and other objects of value had been taken. The tobacco jar in which he was known to have kept money for living expenses had been rifled."

The report gave a multitude of additional details, but these threw no light upon the probable identity of the killers. The police thought that two men had participated in the deed and advanced the theory that they were wandering hoboes. Possible offenders in the village, it was pointed out, would scarcely have gone to such lengths for the sake of a petty gain; but knowing the old man's habits, would have waited until he had more cash on the premises.

Paul was of the same opinion. Had Lesser simply been found dead without marks of violence on his body, he would have laid the crime to the sinister machinations of the hex-doctors. But this did seem like the work of hold-up men. It was only a coincidence that it should have occurred two days after the casting of the spell with the help of earth from Grandma Schneider's grave.

He went sadly back to his room. His memories of Gertrude Lesser had been revived. Was she really lost forever—kidnapped or dead? Or if her grandfather had had her in the secret care of relatives, would his fate now take her back to New Bremen to claim his property? He promised himself, as he asked these questions, that he would make a serious effort to find her.

For the first time, it struck him that if she were alive she might easily be right here in New York. This was the great metropolis, the place where a person could hide or be hidden with the least likelihood of detection by those left behind in the old home. But he—he, too—was in New York. If he kept his eyes open, he might chance to see Gertrude Lesser here, and if he mentioned her name wherever he went, he might stumble upon someone who knew her.

TWO weeks to the day after he had arrived in Manhattan, Paul faced the fact that he was down to his last dollar. Only by the most strict economy had he been able to manage financially as well as he had done. His rent had been paid, but four dollars and seventy-five cents for a week in advance was due once more. He had been eating at quick lunch counters, and walking whenever possible to save carfare.

His earlier timidity had hardened into a sort of stern dismay. He saw now that New York was no place for a farm lad with an unorthodox education; not, at least, if it was necessary for him to get a job quickly. The precise reasons for his failure

were not clear to him, but he understood that he needed more time in which to orient himself, to catch on to the lingo and the poise of those who forced the monstrous city to give them a living.

Where could he turn now? What should he do? A single dollar bill was a mighty slim defense against starvation. He had made no acquaintances of whom he might ask advice, because his nature was the kind that withdraws into solitude when it is in trouble and has nothing with which to repay the kindness of new friends. He assured himself that he would rather die than ask his Uncle Heinrich for money to return to the farm. The idea of appealing to some charity organization was equally distasteful to him.

He could, of course, still look for work that day and keep it up with dwindling hope during the next few days, perhaps, before he was knocked out by hunger. Feverishly opening a morning newspaper on his bed, he made a list of the employers whose advertisements did not contain the warning: "Experience essential."

The sixth and last place at which he called was oddly different from any other office he had visited. Located on Watts Street near the Hudson River, the ancient loft building was a rookery of commission merchants and importers of unusual products. The door that concerned him bore the legend: "Truman and Hearn, Importers of Portuguese Cork." Paul wondered at a business being founded upon cork, which he imagined to be a substance useful only for stopping bottles. But he was too weary and disheartened to play much with the idea. It took the personalities of the two men who ran the enterprise to quicken his interest.

ONE man was seated at an old-fashioned roll-top desk, surrounded by bales and boxes, and with no other furniture in the office except a filing cabinet and a table covered with samples of raw cork. The other stood close by. Both of them were beyond middle age, and they created vaguely the impression of being brothers, or at least members of the same family. Yet on the surface they offered a violent contrast, for the first was aggressive-looking, with a piratical red mustache curled up at the ends; while the second was a picture of nervous weakness, a man with watery blue eyes, a loose mouth and a falsetto voice.

The two were quarreling strenuously when Paul entered. It was a grotesque wrangle, in which the aggressive partner accused the other of having no head for business and was told, in a dozen different forms, that the contrary was the case and the books would prove it. For several minutes, they ignored the arrival of the stranger, and between the blustering tones and the whining ones the place was a bedlam.

THEN they suddenly interrupted themselves and turned toward Paul. They smiled and nodded in unison. The man with the red mustache said pleasantly:

"Can we do anything for you? I'm Mr. Hearn."

"You advertised for a clerk. I came about that."

"Well, now, we did advertise; but we've turned away a dozen or more young fellows who came this morning. We're not quite sure, after all, that we want a clerk, are we James?" Hearn stroked his mustache, and glanced sideways at his partner.

"That's right, Lester, that's right!" declared Truman. "Unless we can find just the sort of lad you have in mind, we don't want one."

These two surprising characters were evidently the best of friends—with Truman willingly playing second fiddle—at such times as Hearn refrained from starting a row.

"What's your notion about salary?" Hearn asked Paul.

"I'll let you name the salary, sir. I just want a chance to work."

"That's the right spirit. But what can you do?"

"Anything you'll set me to learn. I'm young and strong."

"Hm!—so I see. You're a farm boy, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir. Is that a crime? The difficulty I've had landing a job would make me think so."

"I'll say it's no crime. Mr. Truman and I were both born on farms. But you can't afford to look the part, the way you do. Why, your clothes are freakish," said Hearn bluntly.

"I have no others. But I'll buy a new suit with the first money I save."

"It would take a long time—on what we can afford to pay you. Hm! Now, as to training. Can you do anything around an office. Can you run a typewriter?"

Paul shook his head. "I've seen a cou-

ple of typewriters, in shops down where I come from. That's all I know about them, but I can learn."

"Don't know any bookkeeping, I suppose?"

"No."

Hearn shook his head. "You're a likely-looking lad, a fine lad, I should say. If we had the time to break you in, we could probably make a businessman of you. And the fellow who starts with us now should become our office manager in a few years. But we've got to have some one who can fill out bills on the typewriter and keep a simple ledger."

"QUITE so, Lester," echoed Truman. "He seems a good lad, but we can't teach him everything."

"I tell you what," said Hearn kindly, addressing Paul and ignoring his partner's remark. "Find a way to take a short business course and then look us up again. We may not be pleased with the clerk we engage—if we do hire one now. I like you because you're from a farm, and I'll try to give you a break."

He got up, dropped his left hand on Paul's shoulder and clasped his palm with his right. "Good luck!" he exclaimed.

Paul returned the pressure, muttered a sincere, "Thank you!" and left the office.

But this failure completed his sense of disaster. It was more discouraging than his inability to land with the Oriental firm on Fifth Avenue had been. They had razzed him there, without sympathy, for reasons which were now fairly clear to him. But Truman and Hearn would have given him a job if they had seen any way to do so. Their action meant that he could not get work anywhere in New York, except perhaps as a day laborer.

He spent fifty cents for dinner, feeling like a plunger as he did so, and went home with just a quarter in his pocket. He thought: "It would be better for me to be dead than in my present situation!" Then bitterness and a morbid sense of revolt, a desire to get even with the world, took slow possession of him. His eyes fell on *The Guide to Endor,* the treatise on witchcraft which he had inadvertently packed among his few belongings. He gazed at it for several minutes before he touched it. Finally, he took it from the table and began to read the opening chapter.

"I was brought up among the hex-folk, and their blood is in my veins," he told himself. "I may have been a fool to reject their kind of wisdom. Possibly, it is the only thing that can help me now. If sorcery can be of use to me, why should I care that it works harm on other people? New York has been cruel to me. I would enjoy being cruel to New York."

Paul was but slightly familiar with *The Guide to Endor.* The book had been handed to him a week before he had left New Bremen, and he had been ordered to familiarize himself with its contents as a preparation for his initiation into the hex-cult. This he had not done, because of his growing horror of the Pennsylvania wizards.

Now he read the badly-printed pages with avidity. He discovered that the first step toward witchcraft did not call for elaborate ceremonial. Before one could exercise "a mystic power," it was necessary to appeal to unseen forces, and if the latter chose to send a messenger to take possession of the novice's soul, a sign would be vouchsafed. This would be followed by the granting of some kind of material reward, to seal the pact. Thereafter, the more difficult spells could be cast and magic worked, in accordance with the rules set forth in subsequent chapters.

"Supposing that the stout-hearted brother or sister hath decided to seek commerce with the dark angels," wrote the author of *The Guide to Endor,* with a candor that was absent from the *Himmelsbrief* and *The Long Lost Friend,* "then let him prepare by sitting in darkness and silence, with an empty heart, awaiting the visitor. Let him cherish neither eagerness nor fear. From time to time, he may repeat some invocation pleasing to Satan, such as a *paternoster,* or any other prayer, said backwards. It would be well for him to know what immediate reward he desireth, and to utter this aloud, once. No more is needed. Soon or late, quietly or with great ado, what is to be seen will be seen, and what is to be heard will be heard."

PAUL moistened his lips. For the moment, it struck him as being pretty awful that he should be contemplating putting into practise the lessons learned from this teacher. Then he crushed down what he regarded as his weakness. "Why should I not do it?" he muttered. "I am desperate."

He arose and walked to the window. Outdoors, there stretched a vast but featureless panorama of the city. As far as

his vision could reach in the gloom of the autumn evening, there were the flat roofs of brownstone houses flecked with patches of snow from a premature storm. At intervals, the box-like shape of a loft building raised itself above the dead monotony, yet added no charm to this view of the Lower West Side.

LIGHTS veiled in mist were strung in interminable rows along the streets and studded the buildings. A growling rumble, as from a monstrous bee-hive, flowed in upon the ears from all directions.

"There is no harder place on earth for the stranger than New York," thought Paul. "They call it the capital of the world, and say that it is worth conquering. I am going to find out whether that last is true. No matter how I do it, I want to beat New York. Queer if it should turn out that I was meant from the beginning to use witchcraft. Witchcraft in Manhattan! I,, Paul Delius, as a Manhattan hex-man! Life is a mysterious proposition, no matter how you look at it."

He waited until the night was well advanced, then drew the shades in front of the window and put out the electric light. Sitting beside the table in his only chair, he strove to make his mind a blank, as the book instructed. The task was more difficult than he had imagined. He got to thinking about trivial details of his existence on the farm, about Gertrude Lesser and her strange disappearance, the murder of her old grandfather which, so far, had not been solved.

But he succeeded after a while in reducing his mental condition to a sort of idiotic daze. It seemed to him that results should not be long in coming now.

"It's time for my wish," he mumbled. "That's easy. I want the first man I ask for a job tomorrow to employ me at a big salary and think me a wonder."

His own words sounded frivolous to him, and he started to laugh. But he checked the sardonic merriment in his throat, convinced without knowing why that it would introduce a note into the seance most dangerous to himself.

He sank back into his condition of partial trance, and uncounted minutes passed. Suddenly, he realized that nothing was happening and that this might be due to his failure to repeat the sacrilegious prayer prescribed by the author of *The Guide to Endor*. Well, that could be quickly remedied.

PAUL remembered none of the formal supplications to God except the Lord's Prayer, and in spite of his present traffic with witchcraft he could not bring himself to garble the Lord's Prayer. Instead, he devised a short plea of his own, committed it to memory and then reversed the words, chanting them solemnly in a clear, though low voice:

"Me deliver to Lord Thee pray I, vain in Name Holy Thy take to temptations all from."

The sounds had scarcely been uttered when a fearsome hush, icy and unnatural, dominated the room.

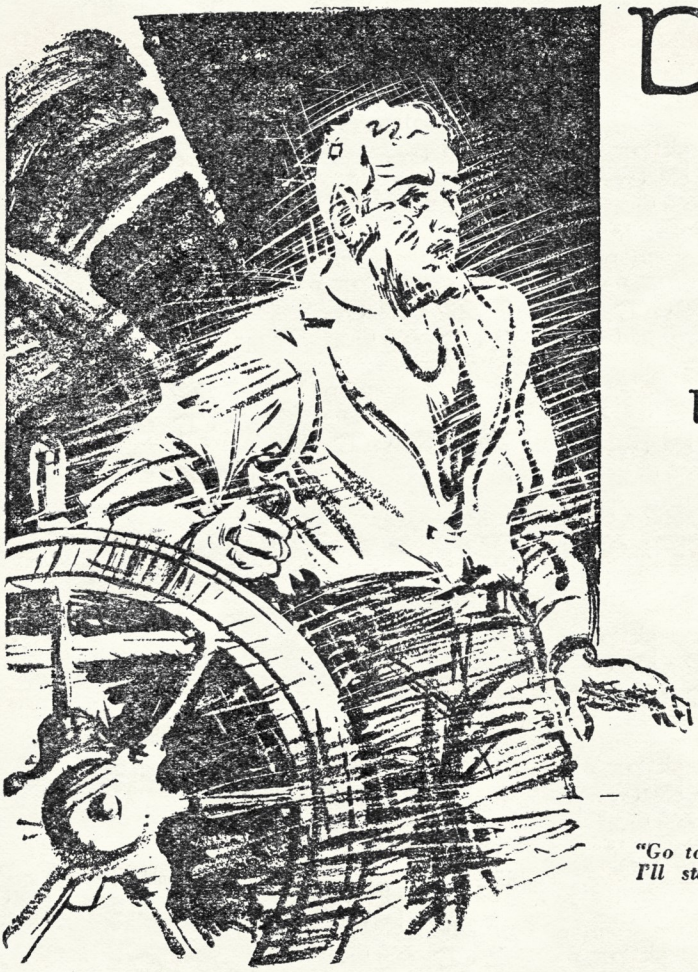
In the City of Power, Paul Delius is to find that he has a still greater Power at his command. Doors open, and wills yield before the magic of his newly adopted learning.

Meanwhile news of the horrible "Hex" murder back in his home town reaches New York. Will he be implicated—and accused? And will he find Gertrude Lesser, his childhood sweetheart, who is somewhere in the great city whose doors are weirdly opening before him?

Watch for the next instalment in the November issue of GHOST STORIES *on sale at all news stands October 23rd!*

DEAD

By JACK D'ARCY



"Go to your boat, Craig. I'll stand by the ship"

I LOOKED at him, and his face stirred some distant, half-forgotten memory in the craters of my mind. I looked at him again—and remembered. . . .

A flood of swirling sea-water swept across the floor plates of the engine room. The ship listed heavily to starboard. A stoker screamed in terror, as a tenuous wisp of live steam hissed its way from a cracked boiler. I scrambled madly up the companionway to the upper deck. Terror-stricken passengers tore at my arms and shrieked frantic questions into my ears. I shook them off, and rushed toward the bridge. The deck officers shouted stentorian commands at the life boat crews, who vainly attempted to create order out of the chaos.

A revolver barked, as the second mate ruthlessly shot down a panic stricken man who threatened to tear a woman from her place on a raft. I fought my way through the fear crazed mob to the companionway that led to the bridge. I met *him* coming down.

His eyes were two glazed balls set deep in his head. His face was ghastly yellow—like a tropical horizon. His hands trembled. When he spoke his voice was vibrant with fear.

"How are things below?" he asked.

"We're gone," I roared back into the teeth of the gale that swept the stricken ship. "Engine room's flooded. Boilers will go any minute. I've ordered my men to abandon ship."

HIS chin trembled, and he licked his lips with a dry tongue. He came a step closer, then tried to pass me on the ladder.

"Where are you going?" I demanded sternly.

He looked at me and his eyes held a desperate, almost piteous appeal. "To the boats," he said huskily. "Come on along.

MAN'S COURAGE

Death bestows valor on one who in life was a coward

We'll take the port forward raft together."

I barred his way, my hands gripping the railing of the pitching companionway.

"The hell we will," I shouted. "You and I leave this ship last, if at all. Even then, *I* go before you do. You're the skipper and you're staying."

For a moment, he glared at me like a trapped animal. Then, in a frenzy, he sprang. Fear gave him strength and a paradoxical courage. His fingers bit avidly into my throat. We rolled crazily down the ladder, given added impetus by the terrific lurching of the vessel. The icy cold water that deluged the deck soaked through my grimy shirt. His lean fingers twined themselves about my windpipe. I gasped for breath. I half rose to my feet, but he clung to me like a bull-dog.

Too late, I saw his leg move in a wide arc, as he essayed to trip me. My feet suddenly shot from under me. I crashed down upon the tilting slippery deck. Something sharp cracked against my skull. I was aware of a warm sticky fluid trickling through my hair. The thunder of the gale roared crescendo in my ears. An awful blackness descended upon me, and consciousness was gone.

I lay there until the second engineer found me and took me off in his boat. The skipper had accomplished his cowardly purpose, and gone off alone on the port raft; leaving his vessel and his men to the sinister mercies of the elements, as he played traitor to that great tradition of the sea—that the captain go down with his ship.

THIS was more than twenty years ago. He had been picked up by a tanker, and subsequently blackballed by every maritime company in the country. A court of inquiry had condemned him in a public hear-

A hand gripped my arm like steel. It was Craig

ing. Then he had disappeared completely. The waterfronts of the world had no report of him. The old timers were for the most part gone; and though his name was still a byword for treachery, there were few left who had known him in the days when he proudly wore the gold braid of a master. . . .

Yet, here he was again, after twenty years, coming aboard the *Gulf Queen,* with a seaman carrying his dunnage to the Captain's quarters. I stood leaning up against the rail watching him. I scrutinized his face closely as he passed. Age and hardship had changed him, but undoubtedly it was he who had left me to die on that sea battered deck two long decades ago.

HE passed me and nodded curtly. It was not a nod of recognition, but rather because the insignia on my jacket demanded the courtesy. I kept my eyes upon him as he entered the cabin beneath the bridge, and an awful bitterness welled up within me, as a thousand vivid memories broke through the screen of my subconsciousness. The second mate strolled down the deck, and spoke.

"That's the old man," he said with a grin. "Looks like a hard boiled article."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Saunders. Who is he? I never heard of him. Did you?"

"Not by that name," I muttered grimly.

He stared at me with puzzled eyes, as I walked resolutely toward the skipper's quarters. I rapped on the door, and in response to his gruff invitation, entered. He looked up from his chair, directly into my face. It was plain that he did not recognize me. He rose and extended his hand.

"My name's Saunders, Chief," he said. "I'm glad to meet you."

I ignored his out-stretched hand and stared him full in his watery eyes.

"Your name's not Saunders," I said coldly.

His self assurance dropped like a fallen mask. His face was suddenly a sickly gray. His eyes stabbed into mine, as his mind groped blindly into the blackness of the past. For a single fleeting moment I was sorry for him. He had aged frightfully. His hair was a thin, white wisp; his face hollow and cadaverous. His eyes reflected a fear that I had seen there once before; and as I thought of that occasion, my heart hardened again. He pointed a shaking finger at me.

"I—I know you now," he croaked hoarsely. "You're McGregor."

"Yes," I said bitterly. "I'm McGregor. Your former chief engineer that you left for dead, when you deserted your ship."

A flaming anger leaped to life within me, as I thought again of the awful tragedy, and the ignominy of the man who quailed before me. I turned on him menacingly.

"You're a yellow murderer," I shouted at him. "A traitor to the traditions of the sea."

My ire seemed to arouse some inherent courage in the man. He pulled himself together.

"You forget yourself," he said icily. "I'm master here."

"Master of what?" I roared derisively. "There's not a man on the waterfront will sail with you when he knows who you are. There's not an owner who'll put your name on the articles when I tell them your name."

His imperious attitude of a moment ago was gone as suddenly as it had come. His head drooped down upon his sunken chest. His eyes were flooded with a blank despair. His hands twitched nervously at his sides. He became abject.

"McGregor," he began uncertainly. "Give me a chance. Give me just one—"

"A chance?" I repeated bitterly. "A hell of a chance you gave me the last time we met."

He sighed heavily and flung himself down in the chair. When he spoke he had himself under control.

"Listen, McGregor," he said quietly. "Hear me out. Then if you want to tell the owners who I am, all right. Sit down and listen to me."

There was something serious, tragic, about his tone. In spite of myself, I seated myself opposite him and waited for him to talk.

"I'M offering no alibis," he said slowly. "I acted as I did, because I was driven by a fear that I could not control. I know that since then, my name has been synonymous with the vilest blasphemy on the waterfronts of the world. For twenty years I've been barred from the sea. For twenty years I've tramped around the country picking up whatever odd jobs I could. And for twenty years I've been haunted by horrible memories—phantoms that rose up in my mind and echoed the tortured shrieks of those that I left behind to die. God, McGregor, I've suffered!"

His voice died away, and his chin trembled with emotion. It was a full minute

before he was calm enough to continue.

"I've been through hell," he went on. "Call it conscience or what you will, but I've seen ghosts—ghosts of those who died through my own cowardice. Hallucination, you'll say. Well, it doesn't matter now. But through it all I've been aware of some potent driving force within me that wants to expiate my crime. How, I don't know. But when finally I came back to the docks, I passed unrecognized, and after a while landed this berth."

As he talked I was aware of an awful futility in his tone. His words were pregnant with the suffering that he described. His face was drawn and gray. He looked at least twenty years older than he was. But even as pity sprang within my breast, I remembered the terrible cost of his cowardice. My voice was cold, and forbidding when I spoke.

"Well," I said. "What's all this to me?"

He shrugged weary, bent shoulders.

"If you don't understand," he said. "You don't. That's all. I suppose I was a fool to think so, but I was sort of hoping you'd give me a chance. I want to take a ship out once more before I die. I want to prove to the world and myself that I've got the courage—the guts to handle her. I want a chance to make amends for that terrible moment of cowardice that I knew years ago."

He was silent for a moment. Then he rose up and faced me with steady eyes.

"Well," he continued. "That's that. I'll quit now, before you force me to. I'll go ashore now."

HE turned again to his dunnage that lay strewn upon the bunk, and began methodically repacking it. I was aware of a wistful appealing quality in the man as I watched him. He seemed pathetic, abject—a man who had certainly paid in full for the crime he had committed years ago. He had spoken of ghosts. As I watched him I more than half believed that he had actually seen them. There was a vague, haunted look in his eyes; the look of a man who has confronted the terrifying phantoms of a black past. Impulsively, I spoke.

"Captain Saunders." Deliberately I called him by that name.

He looked at me in surprise, a faint modicum of hope in his glance.

"You've asked for a chance," I went on. "As far as I'm concerned, you can have it. I'll say nothing. Despite what's happened between us, I'm willing to concede that it may have been just one weak moment in your life; and there's no reason why for that single moment of weakness, you should suffer a broken life. If you've got the stuff inside you, you can come through. We'll sail with you in command."

For a silent moment our eyes met and held. A vagrant tear trickled slowly and unashamed down his gnarled and wrinkled cheek. He held out his hand.

"McGREGOR," he said, and his voice was blurred and husky. "Thanks. You don't know what it means to be barred from the sea that you love. To be kept away from the singing of the wind over the bridge, and the exultant pitch of a good ship in a storm. God! I'm glad to be back."

He gripped my hand firmly, gratitude and a new hope shining radiantly from his faded eyes. When I left him, he was murmuring an old sea chanty happily under his breath. For once again, after twenty years, he had a command.

The screw turned over. Below the pistons pounded down deep into the thrust, and with powerful strokes forced the vibrating ship through the murky water. I stood at the throttle, my eyes glued to the telegraph, and my thoughts were of the man upon the bridge, whose orders were being transmitted on the face of the dial before me.

The telegraph bell jangled nervously; and the arrow indicated STOP. I turned the throttle over and shouted an order to the Second Engineer. The pilot was being taken off in the pilot boat, and in another minute, the man known as Saunders would be in supreme command over some three hundred people. The power of life and death would be entrusted to his hands. Was he worthy of this trust? The question flamed in my brain, and for a fleeting moment, I wondered if I had had the right to permit him to sail.

Again the jangle of the bell clanged into my ears. *Full speed ahead!* I opened her up wide, and we headed for the open sea. Barring accidents, that telegraph would not ring for another two weeks, when we came to port. For two long weeks, the man upon the bridge was king—a man who I knew had shown himself entirely incapable of bearing responsibility. I sighed as I climbed the companionway to my stateroom, and prayed for an uneventful voyage.

For a week it was uneventful enough. There was a heavy sea running as we passed Hatteras, but the sky was clear, and the nights were bright. The deck crew worked smoothly enough under their new master. Craig, the first mate told me that the skipper seemed to know his job well, and thus far there had been no trouble with the men.

"HE'S a peculiar bird, though," he told me one night as we sucked our pipes over the stern rail. "Sticks up there on the bridge, when any other old man'd be below grabbing forty winks. He stands on watch as though he were a second officer instead of a master. Seems he actually *likes* to stand over the wheel himself. A little cracked, if you ask me, but harmless enough."

"Look," I said quietly. "Look, and perhaps you'll understand"

"I hope so," I murmured to myself.

Craig regarded me with a peculiar stare for a few moments, then walked away in silence. As I stood there alone and gazed into the infinite depths of the horizon beyond me, I felt a strange apprehension steal over me. It was as though an invisible blanket of depression had been suddenly flung upon me by some unseen hand. I was disturbed; and the silver trail of foam that the pounding propeller left behind it seemed transformed to a white tenuous snake of sinister import that followed the *Gulf Queen* relentlessly through the blackness of the night.

I tried to shake off my mood, but somehow it persisted. Finally, I knocked out my pipe on the rail, and stuffing it in my pocket, made my way to the cabin and bed. I lay there for about an hour, staring with wide open sleepless eyes at the shadows on the ceiling of the room. As the ship rolled gently in the swell of the sea, the lights from the deck that shone through the port threw a hundred dancing silhouettes upon the woodwork.

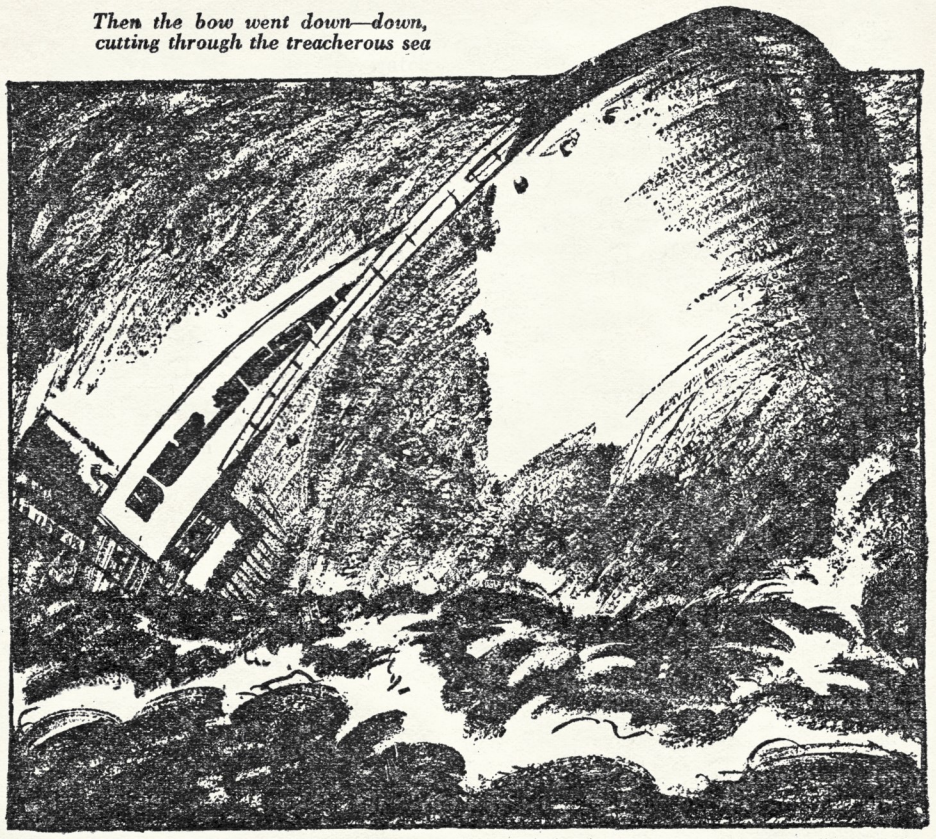
IN itself this was nothing, but my nerves evolved these simple things into dancing images that in some occult way were pregnant with prophecies of evil. Eventually, however, I fell into a fitful sleep. The swaying of the vessel and the swishing of the water up against her sides acted as a sort of sedative to my inexplicably weary nerves.

I was awakened by the angry buzzing of the phone at the head of my bunk. Cursing under my breath, I reached for the receiver, expecting that some minor difficulty in the engine room was demanding my attention. But Craig's voice came to my ears, and the tense excitement in it was like a dash of cold water in my brain. I was instantly awake and alert.

"Come quickly, Chief," he shouted into the mouthpiece. "The old man—he's sick. Pretty bad."

I waited to hear no more, but switching on the light, I sprang from the bunk and

Then the bow went down—down, cutting through the treacherous sea



hurried into my clothes. A moment later I was scrambling across the decks, amidships, toward the master's cabin. As I entered, I felt as though the fears which had come so suddenly upon me earlier in the evening were confirmed. The skipper lay back upon his pillow, his face strangely drawn and pale. Over him bent the doctor, while Craig and the second mate stood at the foot of the bed.

"What's up?" I demanded as I approached the doctor.

He looked up at me and shook his head.

"Heart," he replied laconically. "He's been over-doing it. Been on the bridge for eighteen hours out of twenty-four."

I turned to Craig. "Why?" I asked.

The first officer shrugged his shoulders. "You've got me, Chief," he said. "I've told him to go below, but he took no notice of me. Insisted on standing by with the helmsman no matter whose watch it was. He's been looking worse and worse lately."

Again I addressed the doctor. "What chance has he?" I asked in a low voice, so that the man in bed could not hear me.

"None," said the doctor in the tone of a judge pronouncing a death sentence.

"Are you sure?"

"Positive. He won't last the night."

He was right. The man that the crew knew as Saunders died before midnight. I was with him when he went. At my expressed desire to be with him alone, the doctor and the deck officers had left the room. I sat on the edge of his bed, and looked down into his deep set eyes and haggard face. We remained in silence for a moment. I groped for words of comfort, but they were lost in the utter futility of the situation. Finally he spoke.

"McGREGOR," he said in a voice so low that I was compelled to lean over him to catch the words, "I'm damned grateful to you. You've been decenter to me than the circumstances warranted."

I waved his eulogies aside. "It was nothing."

He nodded his head weakly and em-

phatically. "It was a great deal," he assured me gravely. "A great, great deal, and I appreciate it. I only regret that I can't see this voyage through. That I can't show you that I was worthy of your trust." He rose up on his elbow, and glared at me with glassy eyes. "McGregor, I want you to know that I'm not a coward. Before I die, I want you to know it. Once, I cracked under pressure, but in all the twenty years that you haven't seen me, I never did it again. I wouldn't have done it on this command, no matter what the circumstances. I'm not a coward. Do you believe me, McGregor."

Gently, I laid him back upon his pillow.

"OF course I believe," I said, consolingly. "But don't worry, you'll come through all right."

He shook his head sadly. "No, I won't, McGregor. I'm through and I know it. But thank God, I died at sea. Thank God at last I returned to my first love—the sea—and died upon the decks of my last command."

With a terrific effort he sat up in bed. "McGregor," he went on, "this time—" His voice was cracked and a horrible gurgle emanated from his dry throat. "This time—I'm not deserting—I'm standing by the—ship—"

For a moment he sat there and stared at me with expressionless eyes. The muscles of his face suddenly contracted. His jaw set firmly. His eyes were twin faded blue vacuums. Then his arm crumpled under him and he fell back upon the sheets—an inert, huddled figure. I bent over him and my fingers sought his pulse. His wrist felt cold and lifeless. There was no responding throb in his veins. I rose and removed my cap, and stood reverently before him. Whatever had been his crimes on this mundane planet, they were nothing to me now. A greater power than the opinion of men, had passed judgment upon him.

I met Craig outside the stateroom door. "He's gone," I said tersely.

He nodded. "Better keep it quiet until morning," he advised. "Somers is on watch, and he's only a kid, and the passengers may get panicky if they know the old man's gone."

"Have you a master's ticket?" I asked.

Again he nodded. "I'll take command, Chief," he said. "You turn in. We'll probably need you tomorrow. We'll have to finish the run short handed."

I took my leave of him and for the second time that night made my way toward my cabin. I lay down in my bunk, and my thought was of the stiff stark figure that lay amidships. The irony of his death impressed me. He who after twenty years of longing had achieved his heart's desire had died at the very acme of its granting. Life had been indeed cruel to him.

I recalled the time that he had spoken to me of ghosts, and I smiled wryly in the darkness. Well, he had gone to join them now—gone to join those phantoms which had haunted him with burning accusing eyes in those long years that he had spent on shore. Ghosts! Even as the word passed through my brain, I was again conscious of that strange sensation of apprehension that I had experienced earlier that evening.

I attempted vainly to rationalize it; to tell myself that it was caused by the nervous strain of sitting at a dying man's bedside. But some persistent imp in my brain whispered the startling question to me: Then what caused this eerie sensation before? Was it a result of something that had already happened or was it a warning of something to come?

Once more the buzzer at the head of my bunk aroused me. But this time I had rather expected it. I took the receiver off the hook, and again a premonition of disaster swept me. Somers, the second officer was at the other end of the wire.

"Chief? Can you come up to the bridge right away?"

There was a nervous vibration in his voice. I asked no questions, but answering him in a single monosyllable, I leaped from the bunk and started over the decks.

When I reached the bridge Craig met me at the head of the companionway. His face was terribly serious as he spoke.

"We're off our course," he told me.

I stared at him in amazement; then my frayed nerves gave way.

"THEN put her back on," I shouted at him. "Do you have to get an engineer out of bed at four in the morning to tell him that you're off the course?"

He shook his head. "You don't understand," he said grimly. "But you will." He turned to the helmsman who stood besided us at the wheel. "Tell Mr. McGregor what you just told me."

The quartermaster turned to me, and touched his cap. "It was Captain Saunders, sir," he said. "While Mr. Craig was in the

chart-room, he came up here and ordered me to steer her two points off. He said he'd mark it on the chart himself."

For a single moment, I missed the full significance of his words. But Craig's hot eyes stabbing into mine, brought horrible realization to me. I turned savagely on the helmsman.

"When was this?" I snapped at him.

"About five minutes ago, sir."

CRAIG and I stared at each other in silence. The fear that I had felt vaguely before evolved itself in a terrible, definite thing. My heart pounded crazily against my ribs, and my mind became suddenly paralyzed. I could feel the heavy throbbing of my own pulse. Craig jerked his head toward the chart-room.

"Come in here," he said. Then: "Quartermaster, put her back on her course. I'll take the full responsibility."

We entered the room together. Craig lit a cigaret. I noticed, as he held the match that his hand was trembling.

"Well," he said. His voice was husky, dry.

I stared at him incredulously.

"You don't mean to tell me that you actually believe he saw Saunders?"

But despite the sceptism in my voice, something cold and heavy weighed in my heart. Craig shrugged.

"What else?" he challenged. "Can you explain it?"

"It must have been the second or the third that the quartermaster mistook for the skipper."

Craig shook his head. "It wasn't," he said slowly. "I asked them."

The massive clock over our heads ticked ominously in the silence that followed. I admit that I was afraid, and the pallor of Craig's face indicated that he also knew the same sinking sensation at the pit of the stomach that was upon me. Vainly, I searched my mind for some explanation of the quartermaster's words, but even as I tried to reason with myself, I knew—instinctively, deep within me, that the only explanation was one that I dared not admit. We sat in that swaying chart-room as two dumb men, rendered mute by a thing of which we dared not speak.

Then the storm came up; suddenly and without warning. The hand on the barometer fell, and a devil spawned gale from nowhere flung cruel and icy talons across the ship. The sea, which had been heavy, abruptly became a roaring live thing, which hurled the steel ship upon the crests of her waves as though it were made of tinder. Automatically, Craig rose to his feet, and peered through the glass.

"It's bad," he said gravely. "When it comes up suddenly like this. We've got a tough night ahead, Chief."

I nodded. "I'd better get below and see to things in the engine room." By some tacit unspoken agreement, we each avoided the subject that was uppermost in our minds. The ship lurched violently. Craig roared an oath, and burst from the room onto the bridge. I followed him, and saw him grab the wheel.

"Can't you hold her to her course?" he shouted at the quartermaster. *"Hard a-port!"*

The seaman turned a white drawn face to that of the mate. His eyes were twin pools of black terror. When he spoke, his voice was harsh and rasping.

"Something—" he jerked out. "There's something here. Something forced the wheel to starboard. Something cold and clammy seized my hands and turned her over."

Craig spun the helm over hard.

"You're either drunk or crazy," he bellowed into the raging gale which swept upon us with a devastating fury. "Get below, and tell Mr. Somers I want him up here at once."

The sailor lost no time in quitting the bridge. Craig got the wheel steady once more and turned to me.

"Well," he said again. "What now?"

"Craig," I said breathlessly. "It can't be. It *can't.*"

"Then what is it?"

BEFORE I could frame a reply Somers came up the companionway. He saluted Craig.

"Take the wheel for a while, Somers," said the mate. "Something's going on here tonight. I want you to handle her through this storm."

Somers placed his hands on the helm and Craig and I once again retired to the chart-room. The wind tore across the decks with a moan like a banshee's wail, and my heart turned to water within me. I kept repeating a sentence in my brain. *Saunders is dead, Saunders is—dead!* But was he?

Craig's excited shout came to my ears. I rushed across the room to where he was bending over the chart.

"Look! Look!" he yelled, his voice vibrant with suppressed alarm. "The chart. It's changed—and in Saunder's writing. Look!"

I bent down and studied the map that he indicated with a trembling finger. There sure enough before my startled eyes was a correction on the map. The thin black line that traced the ship's course across the blue paper, had been slightly altered. In the margin were two notations marking the change of longitude and latitude. *And they were in Saunders' writing.*

IF I had known fear before, it completely dominated me now. The gale without roared a threat of death down upon the quivering ship. But it was not of death that I was afraid. I had faced the grim reaper before—and I had faced him with courage in my heart, but now, with pounding heart, and knees that almost refused to support me, I confronted—what? I knew not, and the awful terror of the unknown and unseen clutched me with a gripping hand.

Craig's hand gripped the table till the knuckles showed white; his voice was a hoarse whisper. "Maybe—maybe, he's not dead."

It was an absurd hope. Had I not seen him die? But I grasped at the single fact that would save our sanity.

"Wait," I gasped. "I'll look."

Like one possessed I burst through the door, and leaped down the pitching companionway. As I reached the upper deck, the sea rose up and crashed heavily over the vessel. I clung to the rail for support as the deluge swept over me. The ship vibrated like a crazed animal. For a moment, I was reminded of a like night twenty years ago, when the man who lay dead within his cabin had so violated the great tradition of the sea.

A dim light shone through the port of the master's quarters. I let myself in the door, and slammed it shut in the teeth of the gale which essayed to follow me in. Hurriedly I looked toward the bed. Yes, there he lay, a huddled figure beneath the sheet that was pulled mercifully over his face. I was afraid—but pulling myself together I approached the corpse. Nervously, I jerked the covering from his face.

The man that his crew knew as Saunders lay still, in the peace and tranquillity of death. His hands were folded across his breast. No sign of life was apparent. His eyes stared glazed, and unseeing toward the cabin ceiling. He was dead. Dead . . . beyond all shadow of doubt.

Yet, I shuddered. Somehow I was conscious of a presence in that room. Startled I glanced around, but saw nothing save the reflection of my own pallid face in the tall mirror beyond. Still, I knew something—someone—was there. The dim yellow light shed by the single bulb that remained lit in the room cast evil dancing shadows in the corners. A prickly sensation assailed the back of my neck. I could hear the beating of my heart even above the roar of the biting wind outside. Then, like a fallen mask, my veneer of civilization dropped from me. I was, for the moment, cognizant of nothing but fear—an overwhelming, terrific fear that swept all reason before it. Uttering a wild yell, I fled like a madman from the place.

The wind flung itself full in my face as I gained the deck and struggled up the companionway, wildly shrieking for Craig as I ran. But my cries were lost in the thunder of the waves, and the howling of the Northwester that descended upon us. I sighed with relief as I gained the top step, but then once more I was suddenly frozen to the spot with horror.

For there, clutching frantically at the wheel, which despite his efforts, swung slowly and relentlessly over to starboard, was Somers. His face was a livid mask of terror, and the muscles of his neck stood out like cords. His mouth opened and framed unspoken words. With all his strength, he bore down on the helm, straining to bring her around to port. Yet there, before my very eyes, the wheel went down on the starboard side. Finally, words broke through Somers' paralyzed vocal chords.

"Craig," he shrieked. "Craig. For God's sake—"

CRAIG dashed out from the chart-room, and somehow I broke the spell that was upon me. I sprang from the ladder head, and rushed toward the terror stricken mate. He turned wild, staring eyes upon us as we reached his side.

"There's something pulling the wheel 'round," he gasped. "Something's swinging her to starboard."

Craig and I laid hands on the spinning helm together. My eyes were on the ship's bow. Slowly, she was turning into the West, ploughing through the heavy cruel seas that battered relentlessly against her tossing hull. I tugged on a spoke with all

my strength. Sweat dripped down into my eyes, and the fear that was in Somers' eyes was reflected on my face. *Something was pulling at the wheel!*

Though the three of us pulled to port with frenzied, tensed muscles, the helm gradually, but surely swung over to starboard. I could feel some terrible force—some overwhelming unseen power, forcing the wheel round. The wet spoke slipped through my fingers. Craig yelled something in my ear. Frantically, I sought another hold.

"Pull," screamed Somers. "For God's sake pull. There's some devil here that's trying to wreck us."

We pulled. Three fear stamped faces thrust forward into the howling gale; three pair of stark terror stricken eyes peering into the blackness beyond as though to see what mad demon of the sea was haunting us; three pair of aching straining hands tugging at a piece of wet wood. God, we pulled!

Then my heart gave a sudden leap. "She's moving," I yelled in Craig's ear. "She's moving!"

And she was. Slowly, the helm came over. Slowly, ever so slowly; but she moved. Gradually, the dripping bows of the vessel came around and thrust themselves flush into the teeth of the storm. Then I heard something that froze the blood within my veins. Behind me there was a short hissing sound, as though some weary soul was sighing. Swiftly, I turned. But nothing was there save the black ominous silhouette of the deserted decks, and the weirdly tossing smokestacks that from time to time spewed forth handsful of red sparks.

Craig was staring at me. He read the fear in my eyes.

"You heard it?" he asked hoarsely.

I nodded. I was beyond all speech. He wiped his brow with the back of his hand, and then with an effort that was positively physical, pulled himself together.

"SHE'S back on her course," he said in a strange hollow voice. "Call us if she goes off again, Somers. There's something mad, evil on this ship. Pray God we last the night out."

Somers excitedly thrust out his arm. "Look," he cried. "Look! A derelict."

Our eyes followed his outstretched finger. There before us, a weird skeleton in the dancing lights of the *Gulf Queen,* floated a half submerged vessel. Her masts were waving weirdly like the arms of some gaunt Lorelei beckoning us to disaster. Her battered funnels were twin black columns in the night. The bows of the *Gulf Queen* cut the raging sea, and bore down upon the tossing derelict that imperiled us.

Craig's arm jerked the telegraph to the engine room. Then he sprang to Somers' aid.

"Hard a-starboard," he shouted.

And once again we bent over the wheel, struggling to put her over. It flashed to my mind, that less than a moment ago, we had been fighting to put her to port. Was, then, the mysterious force that had thrown us off our course some benevolent power that had striven to save us from the danger which was now under our plunging bows?

I HAD no time to answer the question then. There was a tremendous crash, as steel met steel. The vessel shuddered like a frightened horse. The propeller whirred madly in the air, as the stern rose high out of the water, and her bow plunged deep into the sea. The wreck beside us tossed up and down on the waves, and an avid deluge poured through the hole she had made in our hull. The wind howled a macabre swan song about our ears.

"To the boats," shouted Craig. "We're gone."

The three of us sprang down the companionway. I muttered a silent prayer that the impact had awakened the passengers, so that no time would be lost. We gained the lower deck. To my utter amazement, both passengers and crew were lining up in orderly files before their respective boat stations. Craig's voice shouted orders in the darkness. The bo'sun passed me.

"Who spread the alarm," I asked. "How is it everyone's awake?"

"The skipper," he replied. "Captain Saunders aroused the passengers and the crew. And just in time, too, if you ask me."

The skipper? Again my brain reeled. I reached for the rail to support me. *And then I heard his voice.*

"Swing the boats out."

It was unmistakably his voice. I stared all around me into the darkness but could see nothing. The commanders of the boats coolly obeyed the order. A hand gripped my arm like steel. It was Craig.

"Did you hear that?"

But before I could answer the voice of Saunders came again.

"Go to your boat, Craig. I'll stand by the ship."

I'll stand by the ship! In one illuminating moment, I understood. Fear left me. The dull apprehension that I had known all night was suddenly gone, and in its place was a calm understanding. Saunders was redeeming himself in death. He had vowed to me that he possessed the inherent fitness and gallantry for a command, and even the swift doom which had come upon him could not cheat him of the chance to prove his true courage. He had returned from that shadowy realm of the unknown to take command, to seize this opportunity to make amends for his cowardice of long ago. It was he who had vainly tried to steer us off our course and out of the path of the derelict. It was he who had doctored the chart to save us; and finally it was he who had aroused the crew, and taken command at the finish. *He was standing by the ship.*

I JERKED at Craig's arm. He was standing there with dull, glazed eyes. "Come on," I said.

He shook his head doggedly. "I'm in command, I'll stay."

Again came that voice from another realm, and it was steady, fearless, vibrant with courage. "I'm in command, Craig, not you. Go to your boat. I'll stand by."

Craig turned his eyes to mine. A mute appeal was written there. He stretched his hands out to me as though imploring me to cope with something that was beyond his understanding.

"Come on, Craig," I said. "Saunders will stand by. You've been ordered to leave."

"God, McGregor, am I mad? Saunders is dead. He's dead, I tell you!"

His voice broke off about two points this side of hysteria. Then he broke down and sobbed like a child. The night had been too much for him. Gently I took him in tow and led him toward the last life boat. Together, we clambered into the stern boat. It was the only one remaining. From the darkness of the deck came that voice again.

"Lower that boat."

We swung out on the davits, and descended toward the lashing sea beneath. The first grey fingers of dawn thrust themselves over the eastern horizon. We hit the crest of a wave, then twelve oars dipped into the water, and we shot away from the stricken vessel. Craig sat in the stern, his head buried in his hands. As we pulled away, I strained my eyes toward the *Gulf Queen*. She was more than half submerged in green water. Her funnels belched no smoke; and her masts lay prone across her shattered decks. My gaze peered toward her bridge. I shook Craig's shoulder.

"Look," I said quietly. "Look, and perhaps you'll understand."

Together we stared through the murky dawn. A dark figure stood at the helm of the doomed vessel. A dark figure whose identity was unmistakable. He stood erect, and valiant, his hands upon the helm, his gaze straight ahead upon the course, like a viking on his journey to Valhalla. A huge wave tossed the *Gulf Queen* high upon its crest. Then the bow went down—down, cutting through the treacherous sea. Up went the stern, till the ship was almost perpendicular. But still that figure at the wheel did not move.

She seemed to stand there, suspended in water and air for a moment. Then she went. Like a huge misshaped shell fired from an unseen gun, she plunged toward the bottom of the ocean. As her stern disappeared, I noticed the rudder was flat and straight, her helm was held firm and steady by the ghostly hands of the phantom on her bridge. An angry sea roared over her. Bubbles. Bubbles. And she was gone, without a single trace. I glanced down at Craig. He seemed calmer.

"I don't understand it yet," he said. "But whatever he is—ghost or man—he's standing by his ship."

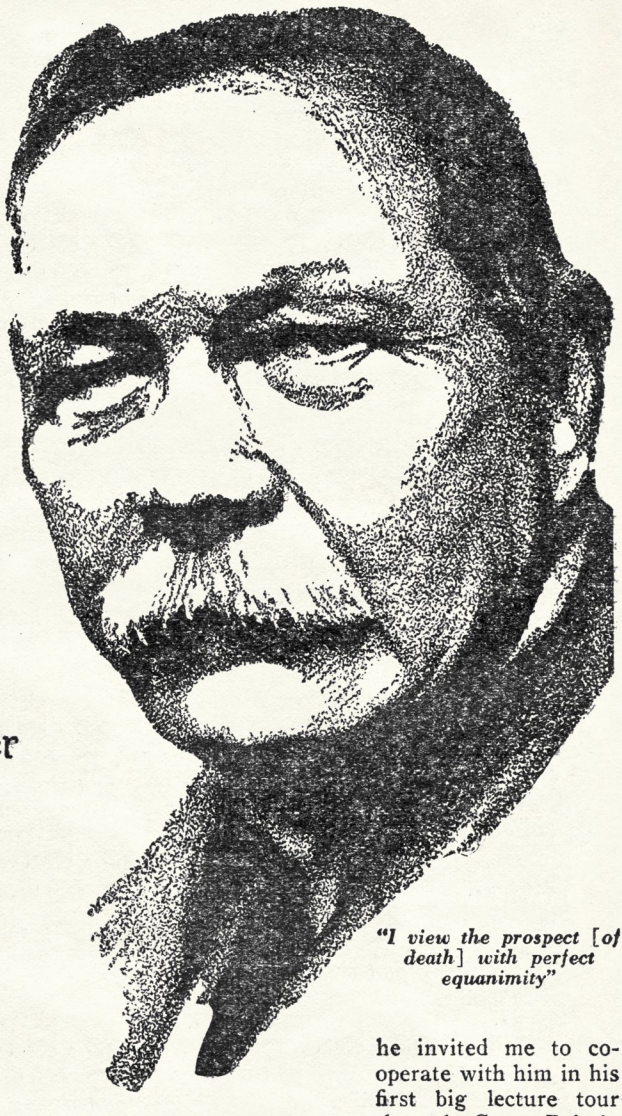
"He's doing more than that," I said solemnly. "He's making atonement, after twenty years in Purgatory."

Suddenly, I thought of that scene of twenty years before. And as I sat there on the rocking gunwales of a pitching life boat, I forgave him, and I muttered a silent prayer to those gods that watch the seas, to forgive him also.

Conan Doyle's LAST WORDS on SPIRITUALISM

and an appraisal of his life, character and work

By HORACE LEAF, F. R. G. S.



"I view the prospect [of death] with perfect equanimity"

CONAN DOYLE'S last words to me were:

"Spiritualism is the most important fact in life, and we must make this world accept it in the interests of both worlds!"

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was big in every way. His tall, massive figure, big, capable hands, strong heavy voice were in complete harmony with his large, versatile mind and generous outlook on life.

I first became acquainted with him during the World War, when he began so heartily to advocate spiritualism as a source of consolation to the bereaved; and when he invited me to co-operate with him in his first big lecture tour through Great Britain I was delighted to do so, partly because it brought me into frequent contact with his fine personality.

Simplicity and unpretentiousness were so naturally a part of his makeup that he retained an immense enthusiasm to the end of his life; indeed, his enthusiasm for the cause of spiritualism probably shortened his life. Not only did it bring to him an immense correspondence from all parts of the world, it literally forced him upon the public platform so frequently that it tried his iron constitution until it broke.

Into all that he undertook he poured the whole of his energy and ability, refusing

to leave to anyone else the slightest detail if he thought it would in any way lessen the quality of his work.

I had a good example of this in 1924. I had just completed an extensive lecture tour through Scandinavia and brought back with me a pressing commission from psychical researchers and spiritualists of Denmark, Norway and Sweden requesting Conan Doyle to visit those countries in connection with what had become his pet subject and principal work.

HE entered into the idea with characteristic enthusiasm, and was obviously willing to go to the North Pole if by so doing he could arouse public interest in the question of human survival from the evidential point of view. I left him confident that my commission had been successfully carried out, and received confirmation a few days later in a letter in which he said:

My Dear Leaf,
I shall follow on your footsteps as you followed mine in the Antipodes and together I hope we may leave some mark upon a material world.

A few days later I received an invitation to meet him and he informed me with obvious concern that he could not undertake the tour as he felt he would be unable to get his message over effectively through his inability to speak any of the Scandinavian languages. He felt sure that the intervention of an interpreter between him and his audiences would militate against justice being done to what he fondly called "the Cause." It took four years to bring him to the conclusion that interpreter or not it was his duty to carry his convictions to North East Europe.

By a strange coincidence this decision cost him his health, for so strenuously did he work there that his heart gave way and he returned to England to suffer and to die. Yet so strong was his belief and enthusiasm that a few days before his death he led a deputation to the British Government praying for the removal of the restrictions of the various Acts of Parliament placing the practice of mediumship under a legal ban. So ill was he that the Home Secretary begged of him to be seated while he stated his case.

So intense were Sir Arthur's feelings that he spoke in broken accents.

"I beg you to stop the persecution of our religion," he said. "I implore you to prevent the use of *agents provocateurs.* We represent a great body of believers. We ask for justice."

All sympathetic students of psychical research and supernormal phenomena will regard this as the crowning effort of a life spent always in causes which Sir Arthur considered just. In this respect his interests extended far beyond science and religion. He will long be remembered for the successful fights he put up against miscarriages of justice. It was he who established the innocence and brought about the freedom of Adolph Beck, accused of defrauding women in London; of Oscar Slater, accused of murder in Scotland; of Edalji, charged with cattle maiming in the Midlands. For all this he not only received no financial reward, but freely spent his own time and money to satisfy Justice.

Spiritualism cost Conan Doyle both popularity and wealth. Not only did he take no reward for his lectures, he invariably subscribed largely to the funds of societies for whom he lectured.

When in 1922 he asked me to follow in his footsteps through Australia and New Zealand, I explained that my financial position was too weak for me to undertake so expensive a trip. "It is all right," he said, "I have left £500 ($3,000) in Australia for you, and if you need more trust me to supply it." He lost as much as £2,000 ($10,000) per annum on his famous Psychic Bookshop, but insisted that the business should be continued since reading was the best way to get the public acquainted with spiritualism.

His boyish ingenuousness often led people to believe that he was credulous and easily deceived. Kindliness is often mistaken for simpleness; but those who knew him intimately were well aware that few individuals were more qualified to undertake the intricate and perplexing investigation of those remarkable people called mediums.

ON several occasions I collaborated with him, acting as the psychic, and the results were invariably excellent because of his masterly treatment of the subject. His quiet friendly, sympathetic way immediately put the medium at ease. "Don't worry," he would say, "do the best you can, and if nothing comes through we shall nevertheless have done all we could."

It was through this wise and friendly treatment that we elicited the fact from the Beyond that Agatha Christie, the miss-

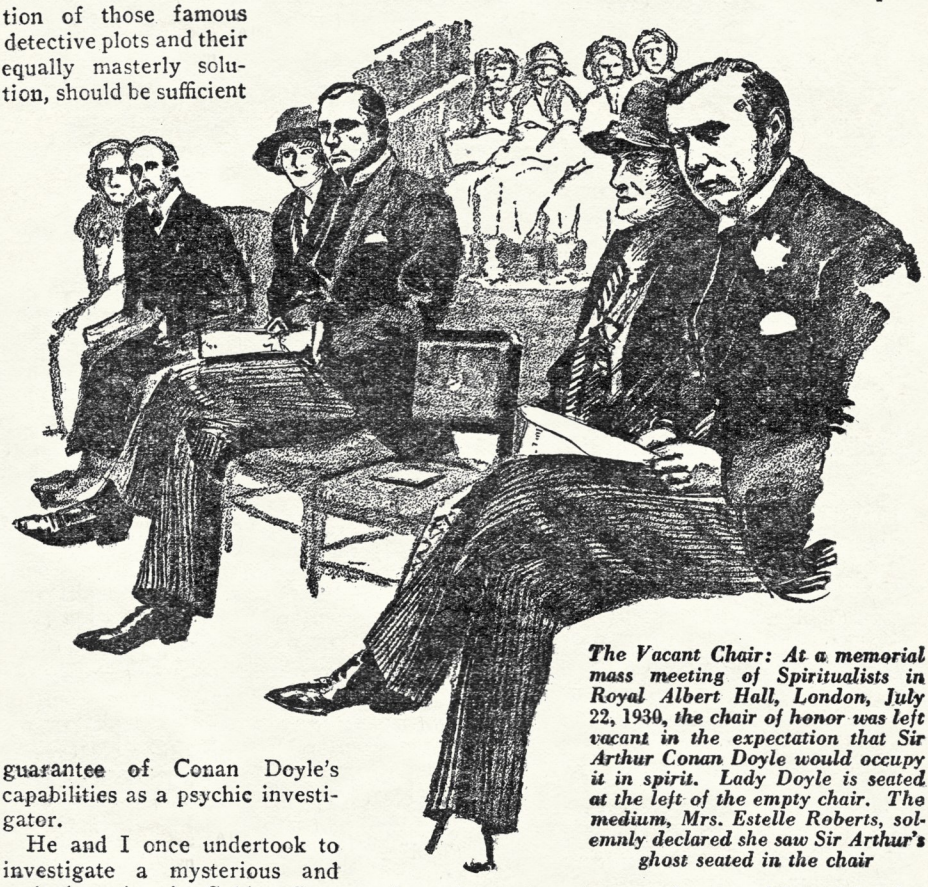
ing novelist, was living and would be found on a certain date, after the entire press and police and public had sought for her whereabouts for days. The information proved to be correct in every detail.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was keenly interested in hauntings, it was at his instigation that I undertook some of my most interesting investigations. Whenever possible he would join in these efforts to discover the cause of the strange disturbances, and "lay," if possible, the ghost.

It was during these experiments that his detective faculty came out, revealing the real Sherlock Holmes. The masterly creation of those famous detective plots and their equally masterly solution, should be sufficient guarantee of Conan Doyle's capabilities as a psychic investigator.

He and I once undertook to investigate a mysterious and eerie haunting in Golden Square, situated in the heart of London. The story was first reported in the columns of a leading English newspaper and had aroused an immense amount of interest. Doyle was immediately appealed to and readily undertook to discover the cause of the disturbances. My part was to be the medium if that should be necessary, while Sir Arthur was to superintend the arrangement. I realized the possibility of the whole affair being a practical joke for the purpose of discrediting Conan Doyle, and wondered rather fearfully how he would cope with the situation.

I had had much more experience of supernormal phenomena than he, and wondered how much the intense enthusiasm of the famous novelist would weaken his judgment. But immediately Sir Arthur commenced his preparations my fears were set at rest. I am still filled with admiration at the manner in which he cross-examined those who claimed to have seen the ghost, and at the excellent method he adopted to make quite sure that no trick or joke should deceive us.



***The Vacant Chair:** At a memorial mass meeting of Spiritualists in Royal Albert Hall, London, July 22, 1930, the chair of honor was left vacant in the expectation that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would occupy it in spirit. Lady Doyle is seated at the left of the empty chair. The medium, Mrs. Estelle Roberts, solemnly declared she saw Sir Arthur's ghost seated in the chair*

The outcome of the investigation was the discovery of the restless spirit of Lenin, anxious to convey a message to all nations which he believed would be good not only for his own country but for all mankind. Sir Arthur's splendid account published the next day set nearly all England agog.

A good deal has been said by friend and foe about Conan Doyle's Celtic nature, as if this was a defect in his constitution militating against his ability to appreciate the true nature of mediumship. Anyone who has travelled or lived among Celts knows that they rank among the highest races. Doyle came from a brilliant family, some of whom will be long remembered, especially his uncle, "Dicky" Doyle, who designed the cover of Punch.

Sir Arthur's training, combined with his Celtic nature (Celts are notoriously psychic), was calculated to produce an ideal psychical researcher. Born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859, he studied medicine at Edinburgh University, taking his degree at the age of 22. His finishing school was in the German Tyrol, and there he edited a school magazine, although he wrote his first short story at the age of six and illustrated it himself.

As his parents were far from wealthy and had difficulty in keeping him at college, he served as a medical assistant in order to help pay his fees. Before taking his medical degree he sailed to Greenland as surgeon on a whaler, and became so expert in the art of whale-catching that the ship's captain offered him the additional post of harpooner.

It is surprising how few people know that Doyle was a medical doctor, having for a time practiced as an oculist in Harley Street, the rendezvous of the leaders of the medical profession of Great Britain. His love of literature, however, proved too strong for the consulting room and drew him into the study, where for so many years he created literary characters which for liveliness have been compared with those of Dickens and Shakespeare.

He was a fine athlete, loving everything manly. Such varied games and sports as billiards, skiing, cricket and boxing won his adherence, while for boxing he has done more good in "Rodney Stone" than modern heavyweight fiascos can do harm.

The passing of Sir Arthur leaves a gap in more than one field of interest and accomplishment difficult to fill, especially in that one to which he gave so freely the last thirteen or fourteen years of his busy life. In his proselytising journeys he travelled more than 50,000 miles and spoke to more than 300,000 people in nearly every country.

Thousands of his admirers will anxiously await the day when he will carry out the promise to his family to return and communicate with them from the Beyond.

Conan Doyle's Last Words

One of the last letters Conan Doyle wrote was to his American attorney, Mr. B. M. L. Ernst, of New York. In it he said:

"I write this in bed, as I have broken down badly and have developed angina pectoris, so there is just a chance that I may talk it all over with Houdini himself before so very long. I view the prospect with perfect equanimity. That is one thing that psychic knowledge does. It removes all fears of the future."*

It may well be that before these words appear in type the looked-for message from him shall come through from the unseen world. When he died his son, Adrian Conan Doyle said:

"There is no question that my father will often speak to us, just as he did before he passed over. We will always know when he is speaking, but one has to be careful because there are practical jokers on the other side as there are here.

"It is quite possible that these jokers may attempt to impersonate him. But there are tests which my mother knows, such as little mannerisms of speech which cannot be impersonated and which will tell us it is my father himself who is speaking.

"My father was a great man and a splendid father and he was loved—and was happy because he knew it—by all of us.

"My mother's and father's devotion to each other at all times was one of the most wonderful things I have ever known. She nursed him right through his illness to the end.

"His last words were to her, and they show just how much he thought of her. He simply smiled up at her and said, 'You are wonderful.' He was in too much pain to say a lot. His breathing was very bad, and what he said was during a brief flash of consciousness. I never have seen any one take anything more gamely in all my life. Even when we all knew he was suffering great pain he always managed during times when he was conscious to keep a smile on his face for us."

Courtesy of the New York Times

Special Announcement

Material of unusual interest will appear in the November issue of GHOST STORIES.

Owing to the excellence, importance and great variety of the reports submitted in the June contest for MY OWN GHOST STORY and the necessarily painstaking task of securing affidavits and unquestionable references for the most significant contributions, the prize-winning reports will be published and the names of the prize-winners announced in the November rather than the October issue of the magazine.

The death of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the eagerness with which millions of psychic believers throughout the world are awaiting an authentic message from him from the unseen world have stimulated the interest in psychic phenomena everywhere.

The next few months may be the most significant in human history in the eager quest for trustworthy knowledge about the facts of a life after death.

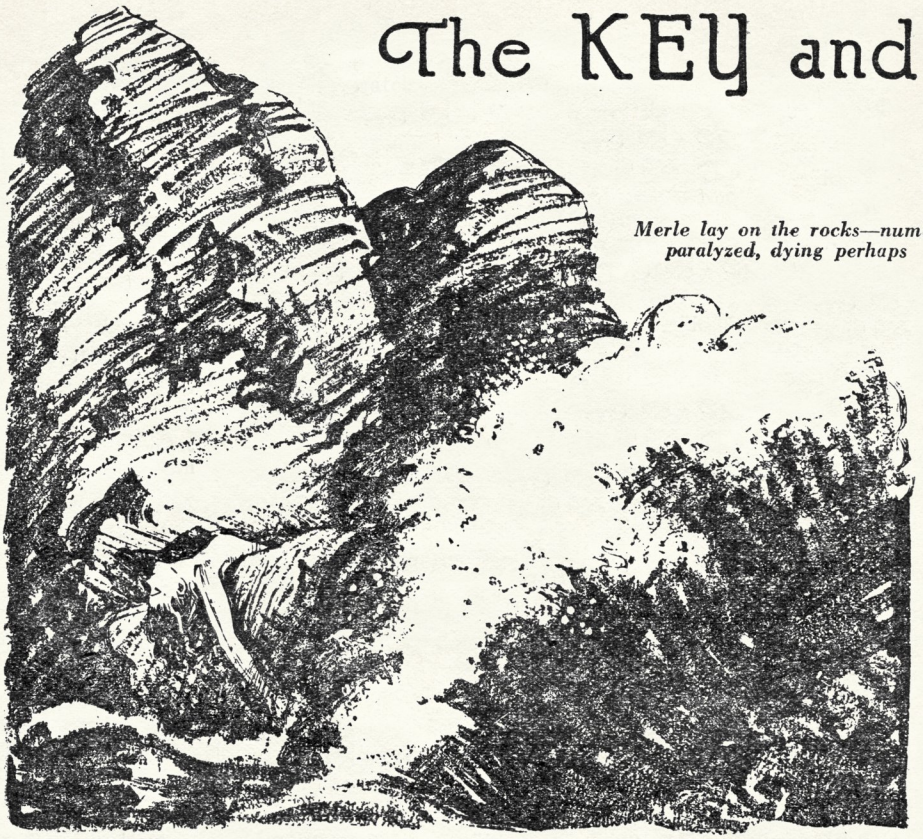
The material submitted during the month of June called for prolonged and cautious investigation.

If, as now appears assured, the material meets the rigid tests fixed by our Judges of Award, a stirring and soul-strengthening experience can be promised to all who will read MY OWN GHOST STORY reports in the next issue of this magazine.

Watch for it!

On sale at all news stands October 23.

The KEY and



Merle lay on the rocks—numb, paralyzed, dying perhaps

A sorrowful young widow finds an August Guide into the Spirit World

MERLE INNIS leaned against the dirty window sill. This subway train was nearly empty. Mostly foreigners, the few who slouched scattered in their seats after De Kalb change. They were reading tabloids and chewing gum, or just staring like animals.

Merle's heart sang, oblivious of the subway smell, oblivious of the dull stares occasionally directed her way. She was going to Peter. Tonight was to be a night of great surprise. Besides it was the beginning of a second honeymoon. Merle and Peter had a baby a year and a half old. They hadn't been alone without the child since he was born. Now, Merle and little Peter had been visiting Merle's mother. Merle, on an impulse, had left her baby with his grandmother for a week, for the sake of this surprise. She wished she had surprised Peter like this before. She could have done it, and might have.

She breathed deep of the sea air when she got out at her station. She and Peter weren't like other people, certainly not like other New Yorkers. Peter's work had brought them to New York only two years ago. And they had done an incredible thing —incredible to the New Yorkers they knew.

THEY hadn't cared to live in Manhattan. Too much like living in Sing Sing—all steep high walls and bare, bleak, dirty streets. Stimulating, Manhattanites called Manhattan; but Merle and Peter drew close together in a way they had, and shivered at the idea of living there. There was Flushing—and mosquitos; Brooklyn, O. Henry's City of the Unburied Dead—some of Flatbush was beautiful, but somehow there was so much of it Peter and Merle couldn't decide where to stop. There was Long Island, and long commuting and longer hours apart—they looked in each other's eyes and shook their heads.

the CHILD

By EVERIL W. MURPHY

There was a light at the end of the pier—There was a fisherman out there

There was—Coney Island! They went there to cool their perplexed brains in the wind from the open sea. They had followed the boardwalk to a hitherto unknown to them place called Brighton Beach—an open, unbuilt-up place where tall and rather handsome apartments sparsely reared six-story heights into a spring night drenched with moonlight.

"And people live in Manhattan!" Merle had marveled. Peter said: "I always wanted to live by the sea. It will be like living beside eternity. Lovers ought to live that way."

From their kitchen window they could see the sun leap out of the Atlantic. Peter could get to work in Wall Street in half an hour. Their apartment decorated well—sometimes they privately referred to it as Paradise.

Merle found herself almost running as she neared home. Never mind the dirty, muddy street beneath the elevated, with its sour, sewer-like smell; a brief turn seaward, and streets would be clean and the air sweet with the spring sea wind. Tonight was another night like that first one when together they had discovered this place. A good night for this return, for the beginning of the second honeymoon.

She went up to the third floor in the elevator at exactly eight o'clock. The colored operator grinned a warm welcome to her.

"Mr. Innis came up and I didn't see him go out. Was he expecting you, ma'am?"

"No. Or he would have met me. But he may not be in. He rides up in the elevator, but he usually walks down the stairs. I'll not be surprised if he's gone for a walk."

SHE stood alone in the green and cream tiled corridor before their door. Her soul seemed to be rushing to Peter—wherever he was. Just inside there, reading, thinking of her and thinking her far from him? How glorious to surprise him like that! She could hear now, faintly, music, and she was sure it was their radio that she heard. The music was the Liebestraum. Then—he was probably there. Her heart pounded as she fitted the key. She turned it softly. The door swung inward. She was in their little hall—but she stopped there with something clutching oddly at her heart.

She could see into the living room. The

strains of the Liebestraum poured out from the radio, wrapping her round as though—as though, *what.* Merle had a terrible conviction that she was being comforted, shielded—*from what?*

There was no Peter there; he must have gone for a walk beside the water—she could hear the surf rolling in. She raced into the kitchen—the bathroom—the bedroom—and that was all of the apartment.

THERE was no Peter; and Merle ran, strangely breathless back into the living room. And now for the first time she knew what had struck terror to her heart.

The living room was dim-lit, and strangely lit. The wall sconce electric bulbs were dark; dark, the chandelier and the floor lamp. The pale and flickering light that revealed emptiness proceeded from two pairs of wax candles—one pair on the piano, and one on the library table. And Merle thought: "I associate dark rooms with too few candles burning in pairs with —*death.* With someone being dead there. But I'm ridiculous. I don't know where Peter is, but he's certainly not lying dead anywhere in the apartment. I'm glad I was in all the rooms. No, nothing is wrong here. I'll wait, and he will come."

She lay on the davenport in rigid self control. Her heart beat furiously—then faintly. The Liebestraum became the March of the Babes in Toyland; then the Song of the Volga Boatmen. The candles burned downward; and Merle's vigil seemed fantastic as a dream. Peter—would—come. Her eyelids drooped.

There came a violent shattering of the quiet flow of sound. Merle leaped to her feet, with Peter's name on her lips. No, he hadn't come in, and he wouldn't ring. She went to the door. The superintendent of the building smiled at her.

"Fuse OK now? Mr. Innis told me it blew out—said he'd take a walk while I fixed things. Said he'd light candles so he could see his way in if the lights stayed off. But they're on all right—the hall light's workin'. You're home unexpected, aren't you? Mr. Innis would surely have waited in. He must have gone for a pretty long walk; it's near to midnight."

At any minute—*he would come.*

But—again—the doorbell.

Merle went to the door, her lips set. What a night! Words formed in her mind like a prayer—a prayer to Peter—she turned to him in every worry, every little scare or mood: "Peter—hurry. I'm nervous. I'm afraid of—something."

She saw a stranger.

"Mrs. Innis? May I come in? Thanks. Sit down. Your husband—a little accident —identified by a letter. A—prepare yourself. A—*bad* accident. Mrs. Innis—your husband—a very bad accident. You must expect—perhaps—the worst."

Merle was thinking fiercely: "I must know how he is hurt, so that I can set myself against it. We'll beat it—Peter and I." She seemed to be screaming: *"How?"*

For an eternity she could force no answer. At last, however, she did. The answer was in one word—the word was "Dead."

Before the birth of little Peter there had been a moment of pain which was impossible. With the hearing of that word there was created such a pain—but infinitely worse because it was not physical, and because this pain would endure—forever.

Merle was praying to die too. But they wouldn't leave her alone. And besides, there was little Peter. And besides, if she killed herself, deserting little Peter, she doubted if she would find *her* Peter. Perhaps he wouldn't even want her, if she should do such a thing as that.

Horror of all unnamed horrors. Merle would live—and live. She was very strong. Peter, who had seemed strong to her—had gone out suddenly, while walking, from heart failure. Perhaps he had known of that, but he had never told her. But as for herself, she knew that she was really strong.

Merle would live—and live. She felt utterly indestructible.

PETER was brought home to Merle—it wasn't, of course, Peter. A Jewish woman stayed with Merle, sleeping with her on the opened davenport in the living room. Merle spent an hour alone with what was left of Peter—there, in the bedroom.

She had heard of the beauty of death. She found no beauty in it. Peter living had been beautiful to her. Now Peter, living, seemed to bend down to her as she bent down to that gray-faced figure on their bed, that thing that lay awkwardly with arms folded—not as Peter folded them.

Peter's living arms seemed to enclose Merle, to seek to protect her. Once Peter had swung her sharp around in a street to keep her from seeing the body of a dead horse. A carcass was a carcass; Peter would like to protect her from seeing him

like this—"But, Peter, this is all I've left of you to touch—to touch!"

Merle kissed the gray-faced Peter on the bed. Kissed his eyes quickly, twice each—as she often had kissed him to waking. Now there was no awakening.

There was a funeral; not there, but in their home city. Horrible, that people came to funerals. Merle should have been alone with Peter. For never again—soon the cold earth would press heavy between them.

Merle went back to New York, leaving Peter Junior again with her mother. A few days alone in the apartment, business to see to—

But she attended to no business. She couldn't make arrangements that would take her forever from the spot that had been their heaven. At night the sea called. To die in it— But to leave little Peter on purpose was over the line from possibility. So eternities of torture crushed in on her soul, and she slept and waked and slept again and even ate—and lived.

One day she went to a medium. The woman studied her—the two women studied each other, each reading the other's mind. The medium's thoughts ran:

"Bereaved. Yes—*heavily*. Of mother, father? No. Too shocked, too stunned and surprised. Someone young and strong has left her. A child—a baby? No, she's so desolately companionless—it's a maturer tie that's broken here. Her husband, certainly."

Aloud, she said:

"A spirit stands behind you—with open arms." She twitched and wailed: "A lover—a husband—a true mate. He says—"

NOT under any circumstances would Peter have said anything the medium said. Peter was never trite, and he had a sense of humor. The effects were studied. But—were they? Suddenly there came a strange, deep tremor—an almost painful throb of sincerity:

"I see—a key. The key—*of Peter*. And a little child. They lead you into the Light. You will find the key—of Peter—to unlock—"

The china-blue eyes of the medium jerked open. A queer look of fright was in them.

"I'm *cold!*" she whimpered. "You're psychic, very psychic. You've frozen me. What did I say to you just now?" Real curiosity was speaking. Merle shook her head. "You used my husband's name. And you mentioned a child. I have one. And a key—I don't know about that. But you said they'd lead me into the light. They can't do that, for my light is gone."

Yet that evening Merle searched in the apartment for a key. Some key of Peter's might suggest to her something he would want her to do for him. But she found no key. She had Peter's key-ring already, and she knew what all the keys on it were for, and there was nothing unusual about any of them.

TEN o'clock. Chimes on the radio. Each night Merle let the radio play in a desperate, wild hope that if Peter still lived somewhere, he might reach her somehow through the etheric vibrations.

An orchestra played a symphony. Merle imagined Peter's voice, sounding softly—but there was no voice. Around her stretched empty rooms that had been love-filled. In that chair Peter had lounged. On the davenport his arms had soothed her to sleep.

Out in the night the breakers crashed. Merle rushed out of the desolation of the lonely rooms, toward their companionship. The sea would be desolate too.

It was a wild, wet night. The boardwalk mirrored shining lights. The lights far out at sea were half drowned in sea mist. The air seemed doom-laden. Merle wandered on the wet sand down to the edge of the beach, where the tall black breakers hurled their crashing wall against the black teeth of a rock jetty. She stood staring seaward, longing desperately for eternity. Time hurt. Yesterday—yester-month, at least—was good. Today was torture. Every tomorrow would be. Peter lived—if he lived—in eternity. Then, only to live with him! Supposing he were dead, utterly and forever? Then—to be dead as he was, utterly and forever.

Tomorrow she must go back to little Peter, though she felt as though her arms would never again bear the weight of a child. The taking up of normal life was intolerable. Here by the sea she was at least nearer the infinite. Nearer Peter. Peter. The key of Peter and a little child.

On the thought, a weak, shrill cry sounded in her ears. A child's cry—no mother could mistake it. But where?

And then she saw. A little fellow, no more than a three-year-old. At the end of the jetty, on a low rock washed by spray of the rising tide. A sheer rise to the next rock—the boy could never make it. Stum-

bling and panting, Merle hurled herself toward him, climbing the rocks, slipping into little crevasses, bruising herself, tearing her tender flesh. An age before she reached him—she was so afraid of that climbing tide, against which his puny strength would be so futile.

BY the dim light she could just see his face—a handsome, dark boy, lovable and cuddly as little children so often are. It was harder going, on the way back with his weight dragging her down. Once she bruised the child and he whimpered softly and she stopped, gathering him to her heart. This little stray seemed desperately significant in her own life.

She set him down safe, at last, asking if he could run home? His answer surprised her to the point of shock: "The key, lady! Could you go back and look for it? A key —very bright, in the water by the end of the rocks. Bright like gold. With a light on it. I'll wait, lady, if you'd give one little look."

Without a word, Merle scrambled back on the dark rocks. Something quivered in her heart—a thrill of awe. A child—a key! It didn't make sense, of course. No such trivial circumstances could lead her into the "light." And yet—how strange!

The pounding of her heart now echoed the beating of the surf. She was very tired. Spray drenched her. Her feet slipped on the wet, uneven footing. Ah! Her hands failed of their grip as she reached desperately for a hand hold. Her body struck against a jagged pinnacle of rock on a lower level. A moment later she cried out faintly with pain, as she landed on her feet on a low rock black with sea water. For both her ankles bent grotesquely under her, and a burning, rending pain tortured her tired nerves. A memory of an old torture appalled her, for—she knew. Her ankles were broken, as long ago people had their ankles broken on the rack. But even they were not left alone at the mercy of the rising sea.

Merle had been on a rack for days—a rack of mental torture worse than any physical agony. Yet now this concrete physical destruction of bone and sinew was very horrible. This physical suffering seemed to tear a certain anesthesia from her suffering spirit.

Perhaps now she could never tend little Peter again. It would be agony to get back to dry land. A high wave was roaring in now. Unless she could climb at once to the top of the jetty it would catch her, mangle her whole body. Even the top of the jetty would be swept soon by crashing breakers. And the climb up and back? She set her teeth.

In only a moment Merle saw that she could never make it. She couldn't lift herself by her arms. She was weak with sorrow and little food and little sleep, and with the grinding pain in her ankles. She clung mutely to the rock, fighting the pain, dreading more pain. Death would be welcome enough; but it is hard to embrace torture as a friend.

The wave was upon her. It was black and smooth as polished ebony, and without foam, for it had yet to break. It toppled over her, a mighty concave curve. It fell, and shrieked and tore at her, and she was ground mercilessly against the rocks, but somehow she still clung with her hands.

The cold drove in at first on her warm flesh and blood like daggers of steel. "I am as cold—as Peter!" she thought; but was immediately seized by new terror.

One hand had gone waveringly up to her forehead. It had gone there hardly of its own volition; for her head somehow hung down limply, and rested against a rock; and the sea, even after that breaker had passed, had risen around her so that her arm floated limply on the surface of the water.

"I might be myself a corpse," she thought. But she knew that she was not, because she still saw and feared and—felt.

Felt—with her own limp hand, the queer shattered state of her forehead; felt—with her soul, unutterable horror.

"I MAY be dying now," she told herself; and learned that even in the uttermost desolation the soul clings feebly to life. "I am to die a very hard death. To drown in ice-cold water, and to be battered and crushed besides, and broken. I am crushed and broken already! My ankles are broken. My head—it must be a superficial splintering of surface bone, a tearing of flesh, but it feels to my hand like a fracture of the skull. Only—nothing could make me touch it again to make sure. Oh, if only now Peter could come to me!"

Another dark breaker was riding in. Merle looked shoreward. She saw the child she had saved. He seemed to catch sight of her, too, and to be seized with wild terror. He ran away up the beach. To get

help that would come too late? More likely just to run away and lie to his mother about where he had been.

Merle looked out to sea. That rushing wall of water. Nearer, higher, blacker. Oblivion.

The waves were lower. The tide had fallen back into the sea. Merle lay on rough rocks, and she was sodden with sea water. But the rocks did not hurt and she was not cold. Numb, paralyzed, dying perhaps, she thought. But feeling quiet; not in pain; not even afraid.

There was a yellow light at the end of the pier. Merle's vision cleared. There was a fisherman out there, dim against the night. He must have landed from a boat at the end of the jetty, since he had not stumbled over her where she lay.

Merle feared at first to cry out. Men sleeping on this beach had had their throats cut for as little as a ten-dollar bill. Merle had nothing with her, but if this man were a city tough he might kill first and search afterward. But of course, after a while she did call out to him.

For some reason the word "Help!" did not occur to her. An intense consciousness of individuality was upon her. She, Merle, was framing a call to that man—she groped for a name by which to call him, but of course she did not know his name. So at last she cried: "Fisherman!" The water and rocks seemed to take up the word and break it up in echoes, throwing it back as a phrase: "Fisher—of—men!"

And then his voice was in her ears, as he bent over her.

Merle knew what the fisherman saw: a girl with grief-struck face and eyes that asked a desperate question; a girl with black clothes torn and drenched, and a shocking wound in her forehead.

AS to what she saw, the fisherman was young, but not too young for full maturity. His face was rugged, with a look of utter strength—"of granite strength," she thought. His eyes were dark, his features well marked; as might be expected in this place, his face suggested Israel. Yet she said to herself immediately: "He is a Christian." But above all, he was strong; strong as one of the rocks against which the sea raged futilely.

"You'll help me—home?" she said at last, wondering a little that he made no move.

"And where is—home?"

"An apartment, only a little way up

"I see a key—And a little child. They lead you into the Light"

there—" Merle's voice broke and tears filled her eyes. That place was not home any more—never any more, forever; but it was where she planned to sleep for one more night.

But the fisherman shook his head compassionately. His eyes were kind. And as one who directs the thoughts of a child, he used short sentences.

"That is not home any more. You have been hurt by death. You still mourn—it is for your husband. And his name is Peter."

Merle's mind seemed to swim dizzily.

"You know that? You knew him—you recognize me—?"

The answer came, explaining nothing: "*My* name is Peter, too."

THINGS meaningful and meaningless, things connected and disconnected, small lit segments of vast, invisible cycles seemed to bombard Merle's consciousness. But the fisherman seemed to see this, and to pity her.

"Did you know," he asked her, "that the universe is God's laboratory? And that such a laboratory must be well guarded from the blasphemy of half knowledge? Even unimportant laboratories have keys, and so has this greatest of laboratories. I keep the key. It was lying in the water a while ago—I had a fancy to see the big eyes of a little boy see it lying there beyond his reach—a child's eyes full of wonder are so beautiful. This little one will always remember the golden key and dream of it, and be a poet and a dreamer of good dreams perhaps. Would you like to see it too?"

Suddenly it appeared in his hands. He might have carried it in a deep pocket of his coat.

The key was heavy looking, long and massive, like the key to a castle or the key to a city. But it was bright. It seemed fairly to tremble with an odd light vibration. Merle thought that there was magnetism about it.

"This key has strange properties," the fisherman said. "I will show you things that will interest you—that will make you forget yourself. You are dreadfully weak. Rest as you look. Afterward—it will be time to think of yourself again."

He held the shining key before him. His face was dark with purpose, clear with earnestness, vibrant with power. A dim nimbus seemed to be forming around the key, like the brightness that frames an electric sign on a misty night. The whole night —dark though it was—was now clear. The waves ran smoothly and might have been carved out of polished glass. Between them the sea mirrored stars. Looking up, Merle saw that the clouds were gone.

And looking up, a strange thing happened. Merle was, for the first time in all the years of her living, conscious of relative distances among the stars.

Looking into the heavens, she had always visualized the night sky as a black canopy studded with stars. Adding to this visual image the full power of her imagination and knowledge, she had been able to conceive of the sky as an abyss. Looking at it so, the planets seemed—as they were—nearer than the stars. It was impossible, however, really to grasp the fact that she saw only the planets and not the stars at all, but only their signal lights, the mighty stars themselves having moved on to new positions long before those ancient light rays touched her eyeballs.

But now she saw the stars quite differently, and knew that she saw them as they were in space; some dim ones being nearer than others that blazed very brightly. The moment was one holding an incomparable sense of awe and wonder.

Merle felt herself actually projected into the distant heavens—projected infinitely far, it seemed. In a mysterious way she apprehended things no mortal mind has claimed to apprehend—the pattern, for instance, of that great emptiness where the stars trace their pathways.

And grasping new and awful impressions such as these, Merle tried to kneel—not with her tired and helpless broken body, but with her spirit. She heard her voice, strangely unfamiliar:

"The stars—they mark high arches—as though they formed the Gothic arches of a cathedral. And though they move in space, the vistas they describe are not altered or destroyed. Am I seeing, or dreaming?"

"YOU have seen more than three dimensions," the man answered. "It's something like Einstein." He smiled, whimsically. "In the old three dimensions that you knew, you had reached the ultimate pit of despair. Tell me: do you not feel new horizons opening before your soul?"

The last words were a challenge. Merle tried to give the affirmative he wanted. But she could only say:

"If Peter, my husband, were with me—saw with me—"

The fisherman stood thinking; studying the key, turning it, holding it differently. Different colors played around it, following each other in swift succession: gold, violet, white, red, blue and again violet. "Change of position changes its magnetic field," Merle thought.

"THERE are so many aspects of the universe!" her companion said at last. "You know, of course, that everything is vibration; that a thousand *kinds* of matter can, theoretically, exist in the same space, and that the type of consciousness which apprehends the world determines the nature of the world it apprehends. And so exists for the free soul heaven—or hell."

He paused. Suddenly he held the key out so that it touched Merle. A long shudder—a tingling like the ringing of a million tiny bells hidden among the cells of her body—a sense of quickening of all her senses. Again the voice beside her:

"What has been, is always. This planet as it was, before newer vibrations were built up!"

Merle saw—herself somehow removed from it—a globe, covered completely with water. An ineffable, tender light broke upon the darkness that encircled it.

Strange, swift pictures followed like the cinematic presentations of the opening of a bud or the bursting of a chrysalis. A rock appearing—a tide washed, muddy beach. A thing that took form and lived on that mud bank—the very lowest form of life. Life changing; reptiles appearing, things that crept up from the sea.

"Enough!" murmured the voice beside her. "We come to conflict now, and that is hideous. Instead, here is another aspect of reality."

The globe spinning in space drew nearer—nearer. Merle and her companion seemed to be rushing toward it, dropping upon it. They seemed to drop also into a gray mist. When it cleared, they were again on the rock jetty.

Merle had the sense of approaching a tremendous personal crisis. It seemed to her that this stranger knew of this, that he was concerned for her now.

But already she felt again the strange tingling of the senses which had preceded the two visions that had been so real. Real? Were they real, or was she delirious or mad? An authentic sureness distracted her decision. No delusion and no madness had come to her this night, but, rather, truths too great to grasp.

Again the murky darkness of the bitter winter night faded from her vision, and the roaring of the sea far, far away. Not the crash of the waves, but a gentle humming filled her ears. And now, light seemed to flow in from everywhere; yet to move in slowly rotating planes; and there was a rhythm to the humming which harmonized with those swinging bands of light. And now—a change. The Light divided into mighty beams and shafts that came together and glowed whitely, then fell apart into separate hues. The rhythm took on new character and quality, and became music. Light and music filled this new universe. And once more Merle apprehended anew the stars. They burned at the heart of the infinite sea of light and color. They threw out light and color, and were the foci of reflected waves from light that was entirely independent of them. Also the rhythm and music concerned the stars. And Merle's voice was an involuntary echo to her wandering thought:

"This is the music of the spheres!"

The fisherman's voice sounded steady and quiet.

"God's dynamos—the stars. They both sustain and are sustained by vast forces which some day mortal mind may comprehend."

There was silence. The last vision faded also. There remained Merle's beaten body, and the black rocks, and the strong faced fisherman with his yellow lantern; and behind them a seething sea of black and white beneath a doom-laden sky.

A SUDDEN, violent terror shook Merle with a passing spasm.

"Take me home—home!" she begged.

The fisherman lifted his lantern and studied her intently.

"I have taken you through a hard hour," he said. "The hour has passed. I will have to make you understand now.

"You wish to go home? But you have no longer a home on earth. Do you wonder why it is that I, who have been with you here, have the name of the husband who went away from you? It is because you called on his name—the name of Peter; and the Peter you meant was too newly passed over to be strong enough to bear your weakness. There was a Peter long ago who

walked beside the sea; and still he walks there, for I am he. And it is true that I hold certain keys which unlock certain of God's secrets. I have made you see in several planes this night, and enter into unknown phases of vibration—I have thrown strange magnetic fields about you.

"And after all, you ask only that I take you home. Back to the four walls that became the home of desolation for you?"

Merle nodded; and when he spoke again, his voice was almost rough.

"CHILD, you have nothing left to live for upon earth. You have a child; but he will be happier without the shadow of your sorrow, which is too heavy for you to bear.

"But were I weak enough to carry you over the rocks and the wet sand, there is a thing which makes your return quite impossible.

"You still would live, in the body you have known so long. It is impossible. Consider that body—*what have you to live with?*"

A scream seemed eternally frozen on Merle's lips; an eternal vision of horror seemed glued before her eyes. She felt herself to be—no living woman, but a corpse.

Lightly, the fisherman touched her ankles. They were numb; yet she could feel their *inertness*—feel how the bones rubbed against each other at the point of fracture.

The fisherman lifted her hand, which was strangely limp and heavy. He carried it toward her head—ah, it was there she had struck upon the sharp rock.

And there was feeling in her hand, as though it seemed to see as well as feel, with some sixth sense.

The hand touched first the hair upon her wounded head. And the hair was matted and slippery.

"The sea water did not wash away all of the blood," she thought. But her companion pressed her unwilling hand more closely against her head.

The night was rent with a frantic scream—her own. Yet she knew that the stiff lips beneath that fractured skull did not move, for as though that strange sixth sense were suddenly still farther extended—*she saw.*

She saw the black rocks and the wind-driven spume, and the fisherman and his yellow light. And at his feet on the rocks, the body of a woman—the dead body of a woman with broken feet and skull.

The horror of the grave seemed to close over her as it would close over that silent counterpart of Merle that somehow was not all of her. And then she saw another thing—a little thing, and yet a thing that seemed at once to be of stupendous import.

Between her position in space and that still, broken body that had belonged to her, there lay upon the rocks a dimly visible, grayish-silver cord. It seemed to move; or perhaps it was drawing together—shrinking. The end of it was drawing nearer her. And now for the first time she had a clear sense of individual existence apart from her broken body. She seemed to have a head, certainly—for in the back of it there was a pulling and tightening sensation.

That silver cord was attached to her, and it was connected with the back of her head. And as it grew shorter and drew closer, it passed from her sight.

The fisherman spoke again.

"Why do men study the things they do, and neglect to find out the way of death? To study its mysteries would prepare a hard way for them. The silver cord—that has been loosed—was the connecting link between your temporary body that is dead and the indestructible body some spiritualists call 'astral.' It took an hour for the cord to sever—you were an hour in dying. I took you away from the anguish of most of it—and yet, how weak and terrified you are! Look down! You will grow strong and be radiant and beautiful."

And Merle could see herself again. She seemed to be only a misty shape, that trembled like a reflection on broken, cloud-ridden waters. This appearance seemed to express perfectly the tremulous uncertainty of her spirit, and she divined that now, much more than in life, body and spirit at last were one.

THE fisherman, however, had changed also. He looked—perhaps—like an angel. But he no longer looked comradely. He was too strong, too sure, too far ahead on an unknown way that she must go.

In a revulsion of despair, Merle turned from him. She cast herself upon the dead body that had been herself, weeping bitterly.

"I have died—and I have not found Peter. I only want my love. I haven't found him, even in death; and my last hope has gone; because I believed that some day, in death, I would find him. What is there left but

surrender? Why should I try to go on an unseen, unknown way?"

Her crying shook the depths of her being, seemed almost to destroy this frail and unfamiliar form that now was she.

The fisherman touched her with a hand more strong than gentle, and spoke once more.

"Stop! You blaspheme. Do you think that weakness makes you strong enough to find love again? Can you help your love, as you are now? Have you no faith, not even so little as a mustard seed? Would you be earth-bound—and make *him* so? No, you must go on. You seek your love? Then have the courage to wait for him here—alone."

One fears death. That is instinctive. And it is a natural reaction, for death is unlovely. For the second time in all her life, Merle was quite alone with death. With the corpse of herself, as she had been alone so recently with the corpse of her love.

The body of Merle was still more horrible to Merle than had been the body of Peter that did not seem like Peter. The incongruity of the change was now ever so little more personal; and now there was not love to soften the repugnance of the sight of this dead body—for Merle had never loved herself as she loved Peter.

COULD a disembodied spirit become insane? Then Merle felt that she might soon be so. Alone with the black sea and the jagged rocks and her stiffening form there—ah, hadn't she heard that there were realms even in the universe that were without God's cosmos? Regions where the grim left-overs of the reign of chaos drifted endlessly. Perhaps another name for them was Hell.

Was there a laugh somewhere—and the cruel stare of eyes felt rather than seen? Voices behind the mist—

Merle knew that she must cling to something. Planes of existence—phases of vibratory existence—why should the dead corpse or herself be more real than this new, barely apprehended form which she possessed? New senses—like a new born infant's dim vision—untrained coordination of thought and perception—these things were cheating her. There was reality somewhere, but she could not yet grasp it. Yet, for all that, it was there. A certain calm assurance—a state of safety—if she could achieve these, Merle yet might live and be sane. Then, if so, Peter lived too, and she would find him.

AND that calm assurance she sought—wasn't it only what religious people called faith? There was at least *One* Who had transcended all weakness, Who had transcended death.

Peter, too, her own Peter—he had been wise and honest. During their life together she had often thought of Peter as Christ-like, though it was almost funny sometimes to do so, because his goodness was always mixed up with making fun.

The mist was thinning—or was that ugly scene upon the rocks melting away before her newer vision? The mysterious collection of atoms that made up the solid looking world was after all so tenuous a thing, frail as any dawn mist. Yes, with the change in her thought a change had come to Merle's senses; it was she herself—the new Merle—who stood out real in a shadow world.

A light was pouring from somewhere—sunrise? Not yet, and not like that. Laughter—nice, friendly and kind. Voices that were gentle and musical. Half seen forms that were growing distinct—

And a touch—a dear, familiar arm around her. *One* voice.

"Were you looking for s o m e o n e—*Merle?*"

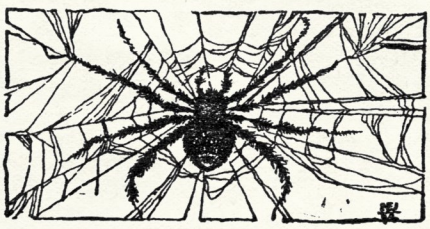
Dear eyes and tender smile—

"Peter!"

They walked, arms interlocked, while the light brightened.

"But, Darling, this is—Death!"

They laughed.



UNDER the SPELL of the SERPENT

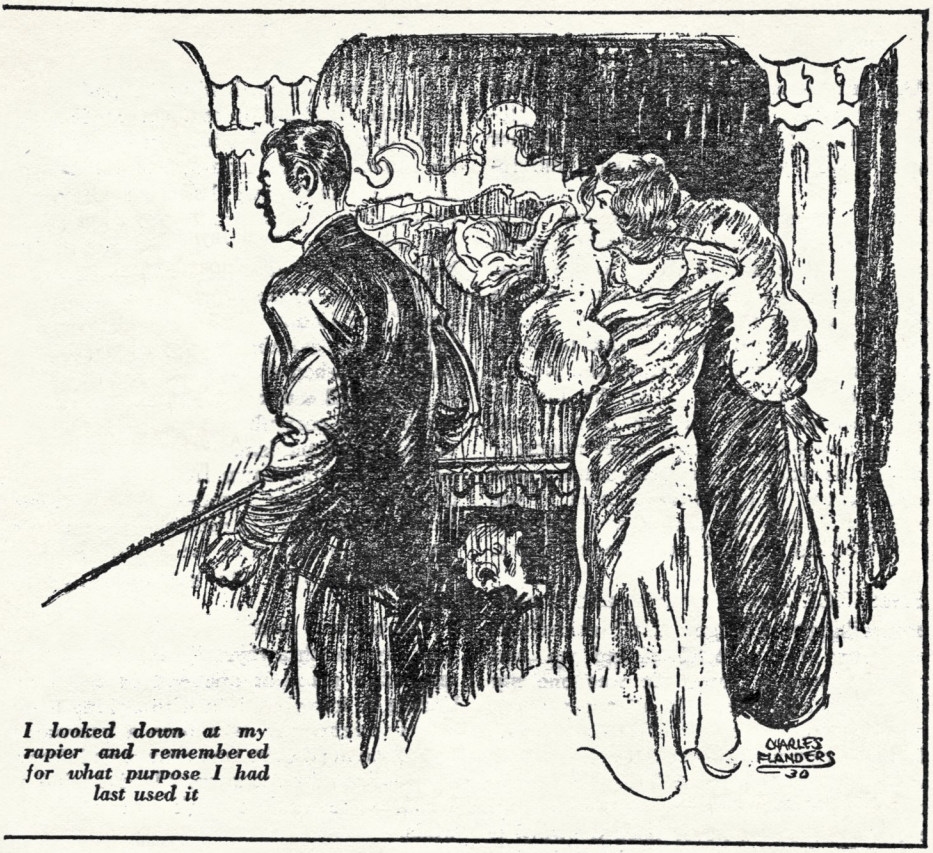
"The venom of Regulus! You killed Regulus with that sword!"

Modern love and medieval hate meet in the life of a young American writer

WHEN the Lady Beatrice Fiorenci accepted me in preference to the Count Larzeni, I had no doubt that I would incur the ill will of that gentleman. Consequently, it was somewhat to my surprise, upon answering the silver bell at my gate one evening, that I found my visitor to be the Count.

There were evil stories abroad in Florence of Larzeni, but Florence is a city of evil stories, and one does not well to believe much that he hears in the streets where the Medici once rode. It would have been difficult to name the Count's years by looking at him. He seemed middle-aged, but his agility of body was that of a youth, and at times his face appeared as young as his body was active and supple. Rumor held him the most dangerous swordsman in Florence, and even in this day when the *duello* is no longer good form, he was admired in certain quarters for his prowess. It was said that five men had died by his blade while the Count had never received a single wound. There were those who whispered of supernatural aid in these duels—an enchanted sword—but such stories must be discounted in superstitious Florence.

I CONFESS to a feeling of uneasiness upon finding the Count at my gate. My servant had left me for the night, and I had been working on a translation of some of Guido's sonnets. Larzeni was in evening dress, evidently he had come from some late party, and, I thought, he was a little the worse for wine. I feared some unpleasantness. I am no swordsman, nor even a particularly good pistol shot. From his reputation I did not hold the Count above



I looked down at my rapier and remembered for what purpose I had last used it

By C. H. V. YOUNG, Jr.

forcing a duel upon me as his revenge for the matter of my success with Lady Beatrice where he had failed.

However, he greeted me with the utmost cordiality, apologized profusely for disturbing me at so late an hour, and made no reference to Lady Beatrice. The low-hanging moon made my garden most enchanting, so we walked and talked in the cool light, among the flowers and shrubs.

"Signor Hallam," said the Count pleasantly, "there is a certain rogue of a merchant in smuggled goods at Rome who has come to me with what he is so brazen as to affirm is a genuine Botticelli Madonna. I have heard everywhere that your sensibility in these matters is unequalled. While I, quite immodestly, do not at all mind saying that I myself am a connoisseur of Florentine artists, I bow before your superior knowledge and judgment. I confess that this picture has me entirely baffled. The touch and the manner are certainly of the master, but the coloring—I distrust the coloring. I wish no counterfeit, but naturally I do not care to miss a genuine piece, even at the outrageous price this villain demands. He has left it with me for the night, but swears that if I do not buy it in the morning, he will take it at once to the Signor Mazzetti, with whom, I must tell you, I have long been in a state of keenest rivalry. I feel that only you are capable of deciding the matter."

"I FEAR you flatter me," I replied, not a little relieved and pleased to learn the object of his visit, "while I have made certain researches into the technique and peculiar distinguishing characteristics of Botticelli, I am by no means infallible."

"I shall accept your decision as authoritative, however. I have entire confidence in your judgment."

"Thank you. When would you care to have me see the picture? To-morrow—"

"Ah, but to-morrow will be too late. This Roman brigand threatens to take the picture to Mazzetti in the morning if I do not buy it. Will you not come with me to-night?"

For a moment I was suspicious. This man had known me only slightly before. Strange that he should come to me now. Strange, too, that he should want me to look at a picture in the undependable artificial lights of night. Strange that he could not persuade the dealer to leave the picture another day. Had he taken the loss of Lady Beatrice more bitterly than I had thought, and planned some cruel revenge? But no, this was the twentieth century, not the sixteenth. I genuinely wanted to see the painting, and my vanity was flattered by the Count's professed confidence in me.

I SHRUGGED aside my fears and avowed my willingness to go. Half amused at myself for doing so, I picked up and brought along my cane. It was one my father had had made. To all appearances it was a common ebony stick, but in its hollow interior was concealed a slim rapier which had been my father's favorite weapon. With this ally to second me, despite the fact that I had never used a sword a great deal, I locked my gate determinedly. As I did so it occurred to me that no one would know where I had gone in case anything should happen to me. I thought of going back and leaving a note for my servant, but as the Count seemed in a hurry, I did not bother.

The Count's car was waiting for us, and his chauffeur whirled us through the magical luminosity of the Italian moonlight. The villa of Count Larzeni seemed to be rather far from Florence. We must have ridden more than an hour over the white roads. Larzeni was an intriguing conversationalist, and he did not allow the journey to become dull. His comments on the countryside revealed a tremendous background of historical knowledge.

"There," said the Count, indicating an ancient orchard, "is a part of the rural estate of Benvenuto Cellini the Florentine sculptor, goldsmith, swordsman, braggart and poet. A rare spirit, Benvenuto."

"Yes, I have a medallion of his handiwork."

Thus ran the conversation. I had never met a man who knew Italy as this man seemed to. He spoke casually and intimately of long-dead popes and kings.

When we reached what he had termed his villa, I found it to be a castle of no small dimensions. Its black stones absorbed the moonlight and loomed against the light sky like a barbarian threat of evil out of the old days. There was a dark wall around the courtyard. The chauffeur sounded the bugle-like auto horn.

"I choose to keep up the ancient customs," the Count explained.

Someone within caused the massive oaken, iron-bound gates to open outward. A steel grill work, which I recognized as a medieval portcullis, was raised by some creaking mechanism. Next a drawbridge of wood was let down from the far side of the broad moat, and—anachronistically enough — Count Larzeni's high-powered motor car passed into the court.

We went into the great hall of the castle.

The archaic splendor of the place almost took my breath away. There was an enormous fire place at one end of the room, blazing so fiercely bright with lashing flames that it might well have been a gateway to hell. The lurid light was caught and thrown back sullenly by the narrow leaded windows which were sunken back into the thick walls.

I was startled when my eyes came to focus upon a sculptured group which seemed to move sinuously toward me in the terrible flaring light as it waxed and waned. When I examined the statues more closely, I could not repress a shudder of horror at the blasphemous subject matter and the fiendishly realistic execution of the piece.

It seemed to be a travesty on the Madonna and Child statues of the early Renaissance sculptors.

THE Madonna's face reminded me of da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," except that the smile of this figure was not ambiguous. She smiled malignantly. There was no questioning the hellish beauty of her face nor the incarnate evil which it reflected. The Child, too, smiled with a sardonic, inhuman, other-worldly wisdom as unhallowed as his mother's. It was ghastly to see this pair in the traditional pose of the Mother Mary and the Child Jesus. But the worst was the figure that leaned leeringly over the shoulder of the false Madonna. It was a satyr, whose hairy legs and cloven hoofs could dimly be glimpsed behind the other figures. The Satanic glee of this infernal face made me feel that the echoes of his

demoniac laughter had just faded into inaudibility as I entered the room.

"Ah, I see you admire the group. It is called, "Benevolent Trinity." Perhaps I will tell you something of its sculptor later on, and show you some more vigorous examples of his work."

I was uneasy again. The security I had felt in the safety of twentieth century civilization had dropped from me as I entered this room of horror. I could hardly understand now how I had come with this man—come without a soul knowing where I was. I was at his mercy.

Count Larzeni smilingly urged me forward until we were close enough to the roaring fire to feel the heat playing upon our faces as the flames moved toward and away from us. We sat down at a worn wooden table and a servant appeared beside the Count with two webby bottles of some iridescent liquor, and massive metal goblets.

"I think your connoisseur's tongue will approve this wine," said the Count, "its true vintage, I'm afraid, would be a little incredible to you—as yet—and so I will only say that it is very old indeed."

What did he mean, I wondered. Here in his own castle his voice had taken on another tone. Suddenly it impressed me as being exactly the manner in which that jeering, malevolent goat-man would have spoken if he had been able. The suave politeness was still there, but it had become mocking. His words carried some terrible innuendo, the significance of which they somehow promised I would have cause to understand before I was free of this accursed place.

I carefully examined my host's face for some sign of what he intended to do. I had looked at him casually before, but now his features struck me as if I had never seen them until the moment.

HIS forehead was narrow and high, and his black hair was combed back from it tightly. A thin cruel mouth curved satirically across his face above a rather pointed chin. His cheek bones were high and his skin swarthy. But his awesome eyes beneath their narrow slanting brows held me fascinated. They were black and laughing diabolically. In them strange high-lights danced and played as if the malicious spirit of the man were seething and bubbling within his head. Shivering, I turned my gaze from him and looked about the room.

At the edges of the hall were other groups of statuary weirdly alive in the changing crimson light. They gave the illusion of closing in upon me until I felt the need to keep looking around from one to another all the time. It seemed that only my gaze could hold them off. Each was paralyzed into stone while I was looking at it, but galvanized into action as soon as my back was turned. They were creeping—creeping toward me. Of course it was a hallucination, but nothing could have been more real for me at the time. And all the while the evil Count, the master of these skulking figures, sat there watching my growing terror.

"YOU are amused by my statuary? But come, you do not drink—you must taste my Cretan wine."

The spell broken, I raised the goblet to my lips and drank deeply of the sparkling fluid. I do not know what color the wine was, but never have I tasted so rare a draught. And yet there was a small strange quality to the flavor that I felt did not belong there—a slight bitterness that seemed to me to be the flavor of evil—even the wine was tainted with the accursed hellishness of the place.

"And now for the Botticelli," announced my host.

I had almost forgotten the picture. At the thought of it I became almost calm again. Of course, I had come to pass judgment upon the authenticity of an ancient picture. What were all these vaporings of my hyper-sensitive imagination? I was undoubtedly letting my nerves run away with me.

"Yes," I said, "by all means the Botticelli—or at least the pseudo-Botticelli."

As I spoke, a servant appeared beside Larenzi holding a picture.

I looked at the painting eagerly in the shifting light. It was again a Madonna and Child. But how unlike the ungodly creations of the sculptured group. I examined it closely, and the Count's servant held a nine-branched candelabrum so that the light from the great wax tapers fell squarely upon the picture. If it was not a Botticelli, I thought, it was a devilishly clever imitation. The manner and touch seemed to be his; and certainly the conception and full, strong modeling of the figure; and the brilliant coloring with gold used lavishly —all these were highly characteristic of Botticelli. I felt of the surface, and in-

spected minutely the texture of the paint. After some time, I told the Count that as far as I could tell, the picture was genuine.

"Thank you," replied Larzeni, "I accept your decision. I shall buy the painting. Perhaps you will be pleased to examine it again in the truer light of day. But come, the night is yet young, and I have many rarities which a connoisseur of your virtuosity will appreciate. There is an Oriental room which I fancy may hold your interest for a time."

WITHOUT waiting for any answer from me, he opened a door into a room from which a flood of yellow light poured. Grateful to escape the red of the great hall, which seemed entirely too suggestive of the infernal regions with its writhing statues like damned souls, I hurried into the Oriental chamber.

The scene which met my eyes was like some incredible extravaganza from the Arabian Nights. Great curiously wrought censers swung from the high vaulted ceiling, and from them subtly odorous vapors rose and drifted about the room. The chamber had nine columns of some black stone which I could not identify. In the center toward one end was a tremendous radiant arch of marble and porphyry beneath which gleamed an altar of a strange irregular shape, carved from a single piece of some sanguine stone which I judged to be carnelian or sard. The altar was lighted by two braziers whose flames flickered spasmodically with a pallid green luminescence that cast monstrous writhing shadows upon the black velvet curtains which fell in deep folds behind the altar.

There were no windows in the walls, which instead were covered with richly woven tapestries interspersed with grill work of ivory in the Moorish manner. The floor was covered with a thick purple rug, except in the center before the arch, where it was of polished stone. As we approached this place, I saw that, inlaid with some reddish metal which I could not name, was a geometric design—a pentagon. A couch with cushions of blazing silks was on the edge of the carpet near the arch, facing the altar. We reclined upon the couch, and I tried to take in the magnificence of my surroundings.

The room was as different from the one from which we had just come as the East is from the West. Here the wall hangings depicted voluptuous scenes of bygone days in Oriental court, bazaar and harem. The golden censers were inscribed with Arabic symbols. Before the altar lay a great scimitar with jewel incrusted hilt. Upon the altar itself lay strange objects whose purposes I could not perceive. Following my glance, my host spoke:

"You behold the most potent talismans of Soliman Ben Daoud, by which the Dives and Genii of Eblis may be commanded—according to the legends. Of course in this modern day we know that all talk of miracles is quite ridiculous—do we not?"

There was some mocking note of laughter in his voice that made me look at him closely. I spoke as calmly as I could.

"Oh, of course, black magic and devil worship went out several centuries back."

"To be sure. And yet—might there not be cases of survival? It seems only logical that where there was so much smoke there must have been some magical fire. Now observe that pentagon on the floor for example. Certain ancient books of mine would tell me that the proper incantations accompanied by the burning of certain powders would enable me to call up the master of hell, Belial himself, or some of his Caco-demons, or any dead person I chose to invoke."

"The necromancers were liars or hypnotists."

"Liars, no doubt; and as to hypnotism—I myself, can testify to the possibilities of that science. Would you like a demonstration?"

Without waiting for any reply, the Count held a small glittering object before me, and I found my gaze bound to it. I lost control of myself entirely. I was paralyzed. It seemed as if my soul were being drawn from me through my eyes. I could not move or speak. I felt only the widening of my eyes. I was dead all except my mind. I felt myself vanishing into a throbbing blur of light. And then, with a jerk of his head and a light laugh, the Count Larzeni released me from the trance.

"YOU agree with me that hypnotism is genuine?"

Brief though it had been, the experience had so shattered me that I was unable to reply. At last my host was beginning to show his hand. I became more and more alarmed. This was his way of showing me that I was entirely in his power, that he could bind me with a glance so that I could not move or speak.

"But," Larzeni continued, "I see that my *provencal* tricks prove boresome to one of your cosmopolitan tastes. Perhaps if you were to look behind yonder curtain—but all in good time. Perhaps your jaded sensibilities might be refreshed by an experiment with the pentagon. You will observe that the figure is not quite complete."

Obeying him, I noticed that one of the angles formed by the juncture of two of the five sides was not perfect; there was a small opening. Taking from his pocket a small piece of the red metal that formed the pentagon, Larzeni held it before my eyes. It was a perfect miniature pentagon.

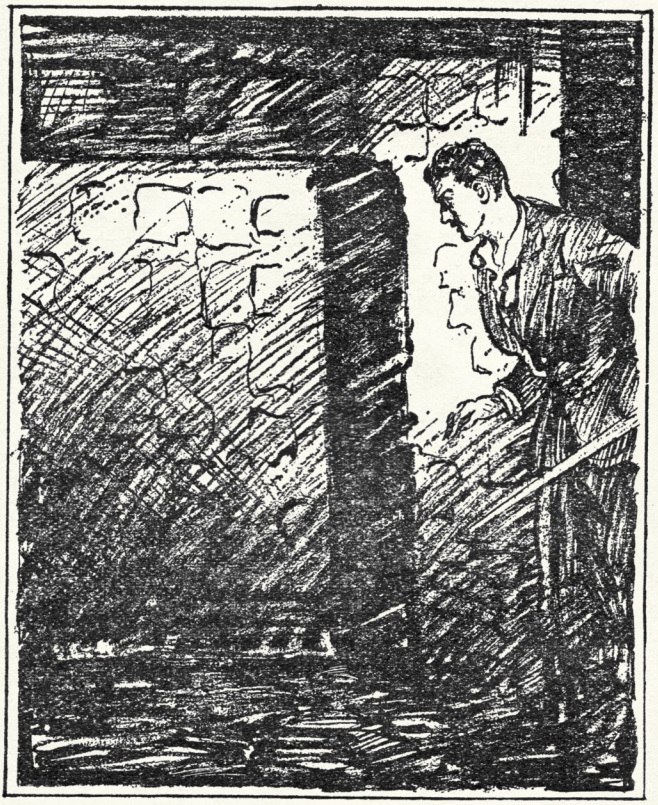
"This will seal the mystic circle—"

Suddenly he grasped me and hurled me to the floor in the center of the pentagon. Almost at the same time he tossed a handful of some black powder into the air, and placed the small pentagon in the open place on the large figure.

I thought that I was on some high place, there was a flailing wind driving against my body and I was hemmed in by smoky lights of every color. I got to my feet and tried to escape. I collided with some invisible barrier at every turn. The flames that wrapped about me seemed not to burn. There was an insane roaring in my ears. I could see nothing of my recent surroundings. Over my head stretched a limitless void of blackness. There was nothing to make me believe I was still in the Oriental room, or even on earth. I could see nothing outside the circle. It felt as if I were standing on some awful storm-swept pinnacle with yawning gulfs and chasms at my feet on every side. Then out of the blackness over my head horrible forms began to shape themselves and swirl down about me. Wild soul-torturing music was borne on the wind—a cacophony of ugly sound. The malign entities which surrounded me were screaming maledictions upon the Deity in the manner of the Black Mass.

When they grasped me they felt cold, dead and unearthly to my touch. Their faces excited my febrile imagination to the point of insanity. Their forms constantly changed, but they were consistently loathsome—unspeakably horrible. Such a fetor as of putrefaction rose from these creatures that I thought I would swoon and escape them.

BUT something held me to consciousness. I became aware of a voice which I remembered to be the Count's (I say "remembered" because all previous events seemed in the remote past) chanting some rhythmic tune. I do not remember clearly, I heard only snatches — references to the Fallen Eblis and his Dives, to Ahriman, and the Chaldean and Salamander and Slyph—to Agrippa and to Medea, the mother of witches—to the Mysterious Sis-



I caught the baleful gleam of two small red eyes . . . the Basilisk was staring at me

terhood of Cuth—to Gog and Magog, and the Sorcerers of Endor, and other nameless ones. These creatures were implored to aid him, to appear within the five sides of the sealed pentagon.

The multicolored horrors in the varying lights threatened me, mouthing unutterable curses and blaspheming against all holy and sacred things. I swung about me my cane which I still retained. The fiends laughed and jeered at me and hurled the stick from my hands. I had not thought to draw the rapier, but had wielded the whole cane. At last I could bear no more. I must have fallen to the stone floor of the pentagon.

WHEN I became conscious again, all the supernatural figures had vanished. I was lying in the pentagon in the oriental room. Larzeni was standing by the open place in the pentagon. The miniature metal figure was over at one side where he had evidently kicked it. The red metal that formed the design, and which had recently flamed high, now burned feebly. The Count was talking. I thought he must be insane, but I was powerless. I was too exhausted to move or speak. I do not know how long he had talked before I regained consciousness.

"Fool!" he was screaming, "you, with your American egotism try to cross me! For the first time in twelve hundred years I desire a woman. I wooed her, and she was ready to marry me—yes, I would have even gone so far as to marry her—when you stepped in with your American wisdom and impulsive manner and turned her from me to yourself. I had thought to make her mine naturally, without recourse to the powers at my command, but now it will be necessary to use means I know well of to bring my Lady Beatrice to me. I would have acted toward her only as a man—but now it shall be otherwise. You—mortal fool—crossed the purposes of Melzoar, Son of the Magi, Priest of Astarte and of Isis—master of a thousand cults—Chief Priest of Mithras—ruler of empires, with all the forces of the invisible world at my call. The demons of earth, air and fire are my slaves. I shall live forever, to me alone nothing is impossible. The Rosicrucians and the Platonists were neophytes who attained to a small degree of the power and knowledge which is mine. I possess the Talismans of Soliman Ben Daoud for which the stupid Caliph Vathek suffered the eternal fire.

Behind the curtain of my altar lies *that which may not be named.* I alone of humans have gazed upon that *being* and lived. If I were to open that curtain you would die forthwith. Why have I preserved your miserable, interfering life thus far? Because it amuses me to see you, fool, so confident in the logical sanity of your twentieth century. And I have a precious pet who is lonesome for company. It has been three hundred years since he has gazed into the eyes of a human being. Poor Regulus, I have had small use of him of late, but now he shall test his powers again. Regulus has fascinating eyes—I fancy you will find them almost as thrilling as those of Lady Beatrice. And if it will give you any comfort, reflect that within a day the Lady Beatrice, if necessary, against her will, will be telling me that she loves me. I shall possess her without the formality of marriage. I shall merely summon her and she will come—not knowing why or to whom she comes. After that—we shall see. But now you shall meet Regulus, and perhaps you will take care in your next incarnation not to interfere in the affairs of one whom the ghouls and vampires of the nether and farther worlds know as the Black Master."

I tried to reply but had not the power. Laughing at my weakness, Count Larzeni dragged me to my feet. I managed to grasp my cane as I rose. Larzeni sneered:

"Yes, by all means bring your stick, my clever American, it will prove useful against the eyes of Regulus. And may I call your attention to the fact that the venom of Regulus is so virulent that it rises through the veins of wood like water through a sponge, so that to touch him with your cane would mean a vastly unpleasant death."

THE Count half led, half carried me to a black metal door concealed by the drapery on the side of the Oriental room, beneath one of the grill work lattices. Before unlocking the door he spoke again.

"Somewhere in that room Regulus is lying, waiting for you. I would not search for him if I were you; his touch is death—not rapid nor easy death, but at all odds certain. In an hour or so it will be dawn. There is a small window—a mere slit—high up in the wall. When enough light enters so that the eyes of Regulus become visible to you, you will die. Regulus is my dearest pet—a two thousand year old Bas-

ilisk. Since you will scarcely get a good look at him, I will describe him for you now. His body is that of a snake, yellow with white spots; his head—his lovely head—is that of the ancient Assyrian cock, his father. Upon his head is a little natural white diadem—the sign of his kingship. And his eyes—his magnetic eyes—they beggar description—but you shall see them for yourself. You will not gain anything by keeping your eyes closed or looking away from Regulus. When this door is closed and locked, it shall remain locked. You will do well to look quickly into the eyes of the little King of Snakes as soon as the dawn permits."

Laughing bestially, Larzeni flung me into the room and clanged the door to behind me. I lay inert upon the floor of the chamber where horrid death lay in wait for me. Little by little I recovered my shattered faculties. I sat up. I tried to remember what I knew of Basilisk legends. After what I had seen, I did not doubt that what the Count said was true. I remembered hearing of the Basilisk—the Cockatrice of the Hebrews, and called Regulus by the Romans—the little king of snakes whose glance or touch was fatal, and whose breath was poisonous. Somewhere in the room was this creature. In two hours at the most the dawn would send light to be reflected in killing rays from the eyes of the snake. This was the torturesome wait that the Count had devised for me. Then, for the first time, I realized how utterly desperate was my situation.

I had resigned myself to death from the moment the Count had revealed his evil power by hypnotizing me. But now I must not die. It was not myself alone that was at stake, but the life and honor of the Lady Beatrice, my beloved. I found courage in the necessity to live for her, where there had been only empty despair before. This monster from ages past would destroy the woman I loved if somehow I did not forestall him.

HOW could I escape the toils he had enmeshed me in was more than I knew, but I felt that I must, and would if mortal power was capable of such a thing.

Suddenly my one great advantage occurred to me. Larzeni did not know of the rapier concealed in my stick. Wood has veins, but steel does not. And steel is the bane of evil entities. The venom of the Basilisk would not be able to flow up the steel into my hand. But how was I to find my enemy—before the dawn? If I touched the snake king with any part of my body I would die. I must kill him with one blow. If he writhed around and threw himself about, he would be likely to touch me, I would not be able to evade him in the darkness, and it would mean my doom. Obviously I must wait for the light to make my attack so that I might be sure of my aim. But how then could I avoid the dread fatal eyes? Their slightest glance spelled death.

I COULD hardly repress a shout of gladness and hope when I recalled a story from the Greek mythology. The hero, Perseus, setting out to kill the monstrous Gorgon, Medusa, whose glance turned men to stone, was provided with a brightly burnished shield. Looking into this he had been able to withstand the reflected horror of Medusa, and to slay her. Might I not do as much for Regulus? Trembling with hope, I searched my pockets. I thanked Providence for the vanity which prompted me to carry a pocket mirror. With this precious bit of glass in my hands, I awaited the dawn.

But where was the monster? How was I to be sure not to see the eyes directly before finding where to turn my mirror? Happily I still retained my sense of direction sufficiently to find the door; certainly the Basilisk was not between me and it. Facing the door, I waited for the sunlight.

Looking in my mirror, not unlike the fabled Lady of Shallot, I was able to catch the first softening of the darkness high on the wall where the window was located. My drawn rapier was firm in one hand, while with the other I held the mirror, anxiously scanning the darkness behind me. My strength had come back to a remarkable degree.

At last, with my pulse increased to a terrific pounding through my arteries, I caught the wicked baleful gleam of two small red eyes . . . the Basilisk was staring at me. I had seen his eyes—in a mirror. Probably I am the only human who has come even as close as that to looking in the eyes of a Basilisk, and survived to tell of it.

I decided to wait until I could clearly distinguish the outline of his body before making my desperate attack. But the initiative was taken out of my hands by the creature itself. The eyes began to move from side to side, evidently with the swing-

ing of the head, and I heard the soft insidious whispering swish of its body slithering over the stone floor. The snake king moved slowly, but it was approaching me to attack. The light had increased sufficiently for me now to make out the shape of the snake. It was about four feet long, large bodied, with a sharp, pointed head.

Now among the awkwardest things in the world is to manoeuver a sword against an enemy seen only in a mirror. Every action seems reversed. When you think you are swinging toward the object, your sword perversely moves away. The deathly Basilisk was almost upon me when I at last held the sword, point downward, directly above the baneful red eyes. With a cry, I plunged the rapier down with all my strength. My steel grated against the stone floor, but the eyes in the mirror had disappeared. I had lost sight of my adversary.

FEVERISHLY I redirected the mirror until I saw the head of the Basilisk. My thrust had been true. The fiery head was pinned to the floor. My sword had pierced it. The snake body was thrashing wildly now, but it was on the far side of the sword from me. I could hold the head at sword's length away from me. It was an awkward position, but I held to it for I know not how long a time. My life depended upon it. At last the body ceased its angry lashing, and only writhed spasmodically. The hateful eyes no longer gleamed like living twin rubies in my mirror, they were scarcely discernable on the ugly head. I ventured a look at them. They were covered by a white film—the fearful Basilisk was dead. I deposited the venomous body in the utmost corner of the room with my rapier. Next I scraped the sword on the stones of the wall to cleanse it as much as possible, and then sheathed it in its wooden casing.

I had overcome the Count's pet, now I must somehow destroy the Count Larzeni himself to save the Lady Beatrice. But how could I escape this locked room? I looked my prison chamber over closely in the increasing light. The walls were of massive blocks of stone, two feet high by nearly three feet long, mortared between. I searched for some secret spring, or some aperture by which it might be possible for me to escape.

When, by the light, I could tell that the day must be half gone, I had found nothing. All at once I noticed something that I had missed before. Far up above the door on the wall on the side of the room toward the Oriental room, the stone ceased, and some black substance which I took to be cloth superceded it. The thought occurred to me that there had been grill work above the door on this side of the room. Evidently the cloth was stretched behind the lattice grill as a background. If I could only gain this height—

It must have been twenty-five or thirty feet above the floor. Anxiously I set to work with my pocket knife, digging out the mortar from between the stones. I managed to remove enough for a foothold. Removing my shoes, I could get hold with my toes on the little ledges thus formed. But the work was slow and tiring, and I had to stop often to rest. Darkness came before I had reached the cloth. I labored on into the night. At last, reaching up, I could touch the soft silk above me. I cut another toe hold between stones and managed to get up another step, which put my head even with the silk. I cut a slit in the cloth, and upon my eager eyes fell the grateful yellow light of the Oriental room. But what a scene lay before me.

At a small table before the altar the Count was dining—and the Lady Beatrice was with him.

Spellbound, I heard the Count's voice.

"My Lady, can you not put this American from your mind and enjoy your present company?"

"But I tell you it is because of him I came. I had a vision that he was in danger. I went to his lodging—he was gone, and his servant knew nothing of what had become of him. I was guided here as if by some supernatural agency—I was entirely surprised that this castle should prove to be yours, Count Larzeni."

"THEN since you admit yourself that you have nothing but vague fancy upon which to base your apprehensions for your lover—"

"I trust my intuition more than my intellect in such matters. Can you not tell me where Robert is? I feel that he is near me—that he is in terrible danger. Will you not help me?"

"Lady Beatrice," said the Count, for the first time dropping his pretence of politeness, "you are here because I willed that you come here. The supernatural power which guided you here was my will. I have

long desired you. I was willing to marry you, and then you abandoned me for this American. Now you are here. No one of your friends knows where you are. You seemed to come to me voluntarily, and you know well enough what construction the world would put upon such an action. Naturally I do not care to pursue the discussion of your absent lover. It is sufficient that he is absent—and may I add that he will remain absent. I should prefer that you submit to me voluntarily, otherwise it will be necessary for me to compel you to submission with my mind."

Lady Beatrice rose, pale but determined.

"Never," she said. "I once held you in some regard, but now I detest you. What have you done to Robert?"

The Count laughed sardonically.

"You will soon forget your Robert—and I trust you will not lose by the exchange."

He went toward her. Lady Beatrice retreated toward the altar. The Count followed. Suddenly Lady Beatrice reached for the jeweled scimitar before the altar. Larzeni's demoniac laughter rang out, for the sword was fixed in place, held by some invisible agency. All this time I had been prying desperately at the corner of the grill. At last I succeeded in loosening it sufficiently to crawl under it, and dropped to the floor of the Oriental room, sword in hand.

Count Larzeni did not hear me, he was hypnotizing Lady Beatrice. I sought to creep up behind this monster from the past and kill him unawares, for I knew that if he saw me he could paralyze me with a glance. The Count, however, sensed my approach and whirled toward me. As I had feared, he hypnotized me so that I was bound hand and foot. Diverting his mind to me freed Beatrice, and she ran toward me with a glad cry.

"YES, greet your Robert fondly, this is the last time you will ever see him," sneered the Count, "and I don't know how he comes to be here even now. In a moment I shall kill him."

"Robert, speak to me," Lady Beatrice cried, throwing her arms about me. I could not move my lips, although I tried with all my might.

"Would it please you to hear his voice, my Lady? I alone can grant that," the Count said mockingly.

"Yes, yes, let him speak—let me talk to him."

"It shall be as you implore, my Lady."

Suddenly my lips were unbound. My beloved and I exchanged such greetings as only lovers know. To the Count Larzeni I said:

"I ask only to meet you sword to sword in fair fight."

"Fool," he jeered, "why should I bother to kill you myself. I shall summon a servant to dispatch you."

"No!" exclaimed Lady Beatrice. "You asked me to love you, Count Larzeni—how can I love a coward! Meet Robert on equal terms, and if you win—I will come to you —voluntarily."

THE Count's eyes brightened. He smiled malevolently.

"You will not forget your promise, Lady Beatrice? I shall dispose of him easily. Do you not know I am first swordsman of Florence?"

I was weak from lack of food and from the exertions of the night and day, but an eager nervous energy flooded through my body as I prepared to stake all upon the sword whose use I knew so little. When the Count looked away from me I was released from the hypnotic trance.

Larzeni drew a rapier from a cabinet near the wall and came at me. I guarded as best I could, and resolved to push the attack at once, since in a long exchange of thrust and parry he would surely prove my master. We had hardly engaged blades before he was through my frail guard and had pierced my left shoulder. I was staggered, but summoning all my energy, I made a lunge. He evaded my thrust, but as I recovered my blade caught his sword hand, barely scratching it enough to draw blood. Larzeni only laughed and began a new attack. But in a moment his face took on a look of horror. He glanced down at his hand. Already it had turned black as far as the wrist. He dropped his sword with a shrill scream.

"The venom of Regulus! You killed Regulus with that sword!"

I looked down at my rapier and remembered for what purpose I had last used it. The Count was writhing horribly on the floor.

"You think you have killed me!" he screamed, "but I shall not die. I cannot die. I shall recover even from this, but it will take all of my energies. For the time you are victorious. All this castle and its properties will melt back into the

past from which I created it by my will. You have no need to fear me further in this generation, but in your next incarnation, beware of the Black Master!"

With these words, there was a great roar as of thunder, and a blinding light. When our eyes were able to see again, the Lady Beatrice and I stood alone upon the peaceful Italian country-side, beneath the soft, calm moon. We held each other tightly, almost unable to believe our miraculous escape from the horrible doom which had so lately threatened us.

To-day the Lady Beatrice is my wife. No one has heard of Count Larzeni since that eventful night, and on the spot where his castle stood the grass grows as peacefully as if it had not been disturbed for centuries. My rapier is eaten away at the point by the venom of Regulus, and that is the only memento I have of that terrifying adventure.

As for the next incarnation—we shall see!

$10 for a Letter!

WHEN you have read this issue of GHOST STORIES Magazine, let us know what you think of the stories it contains.

Which story is best? Which is poorest? Why? Have you any suggestions for improving the magazine?

Ten dollars will be paid to the person whose letter, in the opinion of the judges in charge of this award, offers the most intelligent, constructive criticism; $5 to the letter considered second best; $3 to the third.

Address your opinions to the Judges of Award, care of GHOST STORIES, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, N. Y. This contest closes October 25, 1930.

Three awards will be made promptly. See that your opinion gets one of them. No letters, however, will be returned.

PRIZES

for opinions on the June GHOST STORIES were as follows:

FIRST PRIZE $10

ELIZABETH GANSBERGER
R.F.D. 8, Mansfield, Ohio

SECOND PRIZE $5

G. G. BOUCHE
P. O. Box 3, Walla Walla, Wash.

THIRD PRIZE $3

HILMAR VON STILLOW
890 Geary Street, San Francisco, California

Was I Hypnotized?

A plantation story of things that could not happen—but did!

By KELSEY KITCHEL

THE beginning of an ad in the local paper caught my eye, down in Dominica. It read:

"Wanted: a competent man to look after coffee-estate during absence of owner—"

I'd been loafing around among the islands for six months, writing a book. Funds were pretty low and it was a case of taking a job or going home. I didn't want to go home—not yet. That was why I had been reading the advertisements so industriously every day, on the sunny veranda of the little hotel at Roseau.

I knew nothing about running a coffee estate, but, of course, I could learn. . . . Youth and courage can do almost anything if the urge is sufficiently strong. And my urge was. I wanted to stay in the islands a while longer.

Yes, I got the job. We will skip all the preliminaries and get down to the story.

The owner, a big handsome Englishman going home to claim an inheritance, took my word for it that I could look after the estate. Well, after all he only needed somebody white to be around.

The pay was so small that you could scarcely see it, but I was at least sure of board and a bed for six months. And I could go on with my investigations. You see I'd been tremendously interested in voodoo practices, as I nosed about among the islanders; and I hoped that now I might get close to something worth while.

VOODOO. . . . It is a religion, you know; a religion like any other. Most people think it is mere magic; but there is more to it than that. It is a pagan religion, as powerful and deeply rooted as any in the world.

I had him covered with my revolver. . . . One by one they drifted away into the forest

The house was a comfortable bungalow buried in a grove of mango trees. The servants were amiable dusky beings who spoke the patois which is mostly bastard French mixed with a little English. But I had picked up enough of it to get along.

My duty was to ride around the coffee-fields and see that the pickers were on the job; I had to watch the pulping and the curing, and then the drying on the concrete barbecues. . . . All very easy. I had plenty of time for snooping around after witch-doctors.

THERE was an old foreman—a black man, and a queer bird—who hustled the laborers. He was blessed with the innocuous name of Louis. He was tall and spare and hard. Lord, wasn't he hard! Face like lava—expressionless and cruel. Muscles and hands were hard. His eyes—big, uncanny, in their veiled brightness—never met mine but always slewed around and away. His mouth was thick-lipped and hard. Funny to think of those pink lips being hard, but they were. And his teeth were like an animal's, ferocious—if teeth can look that way. His did, anyhow! His mind was hard too. Hard and cruel. He was a brute to the hands.

I suppose the English owner didn't know or care about that; but it made me hot to see the abuse going on. I was helpless for I had no authority to fire the foreman. He had been working on the estate for a good many years.

Once when I caught him beating a picker I lost my head and told Louis that I'd kick him out and do the foreman's work myself. . . . I didn't though because just at that time sickness broke out among the mountain villages, and the blacks began dying by the score, poor brutes. An epidemic of enteritis. It left us short of hands and the coffee-picking season was at its height. The red "cherries" dropped to the ground and rotted; the sacked coffee beans stood in the store-house waiting for blacks to carry them to port. But there were scarcely any hands—all sick or dead. I was at my wits end. I wanted to make good on my job. A matter of pride.

I sent for Louis to come to the house. "Look here," I said in the patois, "what are we going to do? We've got to get the coffee picked and shipped."

"If you'll pay double wages I can get pickers for you, *m'sieu.*"

"The owner would be willing, I'm sure. It's better than losing the crop. . . . All right. . . . But where will you get them?" I asked, for I knew that the convalescents wouldn't work just yet.

"Over the mountain there's a village. I'll get pickers there," Louis murmured, his eyes slanting down. "You pay me every evening. I'll get them, but they are shy; not used to whites. You mustn't come near them nor speak to them. Leave them to me."

I agreed.

"But I'll keep my eye on you," I warned Louis. "If you abuse them I'll turn you over to the police at Roseau!"

He didn't let a flicker of expression pass over that lava-face of his. *"Oui, m'sieu,"* was all he said.

"When will you bring them?" I asked.

"I go now. To-morrow morning they will begin picking."

Well, the next morning came and when I got up and looked out of my bedroom window I saw that Louis was in the fields with his mountain blacks. They were a silent crew. There wasn't a sound, nor a song. Usually the pickers liven things up with bits of music; they've good voices, most of them you know. But these poor souls were as sombre as granite. They dragged their heavy baskets after them, those dreary men and women, and they picked and picked *silently.*

I kept away as I had promised but I watched from the house until they moved out of sight around a shoulder of hill; then I forgot them.

Feema, the cook, served my luncheon and a peculiar restlessness about the woman made me stare at her.

She was a pleasant, placid looking plump creature at all times, but now she was pallid under her dusky skin. Her turban was awry. Her well-shaped hands shook as she put down the boiled bread fruit and the goat chops.

"Are you ill, Feema?" I asked.

SHE rolled her eyes timidly as she shook her head.

"What's the matter, then?"

"Oh, Massa, have you seen the pickers that Louis brought with him?"

"Yes, of course. Why?"

She stepped back from the table and her hands went swiftly up to her mouth; her dark terrified eyes clung to mine with a tragic appeal that I could not understand. But she did not speak.

"What about them?" I urged impatiently, for my lunch was getting cold.

Feema glanced out of the window, and then came close to me and stooped to whisper:

"They're zombies, *m'sieu!*" And with that she fled back to her kitchen across the little court.

Zombies!

Here it was then, what I'd been searching for! Black magic—call it what you like—but whatever it is, the thing is one of the ghastliest of all the superstitions in the Islands. Rubbish of course. Zombies are a figment of the imagination . . . a superstition, nothing more. An impossible, fantastic superstition. . . .

And yet—in Haiti I had met whites who claimed that they had seen zombies . . . seen dead men working in the fields. . . .

I pulled myself together and finished my luncheon.

Then I rummaged through the owner's library and found sundry books on the West Indies and read what there was on the subject of "zombies". There was not much.

"Now, voodoo," I told myself, "has something to it of course. It's a religion. But this zombie business is all rubbish!"

To get the horrors out of my system I went for a ride on the owner's Waler. Feema had upset me; I knew I was an idiot to let a black woman stir up my latent superstitions, for I couldn't deny the fact that she had done so. Everyone has a superstitious germ in his make-up I suppose. . . .

I rode through the coffee fields and saw Louis with his silent pickers. They were dull, lethargic.

Louis waved me off as he hurried toward me, but I kept straight toward that handful of pickers. I wanted to see for myself.

"You promised not to come close! They're timid!" Louis spoke sullenly.

I DREW rein and sat staring at those pickers. Their faces were bent over their work and their horrible, shriveled-looking hands picked and picked with the mechanical movements of automatons. Perhaps it was the result of Feema's fear; perhaps it was something in the look of those fifty men and women, but I shuddered. The bright sunlight, the trade winds, the blue sky seemed contaminated, polluted.

Imagination, of course. . . .

One of them—a woman—was fairly close to me.

"Bring her here to me, Louis," I said.

Holding my horse's bridle, he said, "It's time to knock off and take them to my hut for their supper. You don't want to talk to them, *m'sieu.* Leave them alone."

Something impelled me to push my horse forward a pace or two so that I was beside that woman. I leaned over and touched her. Louis swore under his breath, but made no movement.

The woman straightened and looked at me. No—not at me. Through me. Her eyes were terrible. They were blank; unseeing; unfocused. And yet they were not blind. There was a bluish film over them. They were mindless; without a brain or a soul behind them.

NOTHING in the world would have kept me there among those pickers. I wheeled the Waler and galloped up the slope to the bungalow; and I was haunted by those blank eyes.

"If there are such things as zombies they must have eyes like that!" I told myself.

The working day was over. Louis had taken his troupe away to his own huts. Feema brought my dinner, and we exchanged looks.

She nodded. "You've seen? Again?" she asked.

"Yes." I poked at the meat stew in front of me. "Yes. But I do not believe they're zombies. They are mountain people who are frightened at being so far from home." I said without conviction.

Feema shook her head. "Louis is a witch-doctor, *m'sieu.* He knows how to get zombies. . . . It's not the first time. . . ."

"You are sure?" I studied her honest face. There was no guile there. But of course there might be any depth of superstition.

She answered eagerly: "Ah, *m'sieu,* I am sure, sure! We black people always bury our dead under heavy stones, and we watch beside their graves until the bodies begin to rot, because not till then will they be safe from the witch-doctors! But now, with the sickness, my people could not bury their dead properly—and that is how Louis got them!"

I rose from my untasted dinner. "Feema, I'm going to test this thing. I'm going to find out!" I said, and I pocketed my gun.

She stared.

"I've read that if zombies eat meat and salt they are freed from bondage and can return to—" I paused. I found the words distasteful.

Feema supplied them hoarsely: "—their graves, *m'sieu.*"

I went on. "Louis has taken the pickers to his hut to feed them—"

Feema stiffened and a thrill seemed to run through her body dressed in the immaculate print gown. She said:

"I have a whole goat stewing in the kitchen. I'll add more salt—"

"YES! Give me the pot!" and I followed her out across the court to the dim kitchen. On the wood-stove there was a huge iron pot from which there drifted the savory smell of boiling meat. I seized it as Feema flung a cupful of salt into it, and I walked away with the kettle toward the group of hovels that was Louis' domain. He and his wife and their many children had a small village, away from the other blacks. The path to it wound around a cliff, and I went along it while Feema followed, drawn I suppose by curiosity that was stronger than her fear.

The quick night had already fallen when I came to Louis' village, and I saw the man standing among his squatting pickers. Somewhere in the shadows his wife and children lurked, but he himself was a clear, distinct picture in the light of the fire burning on the ground. On the fire was a huge pot which contained the supper for those men and women from far up and away over the mountain.

I moved softly, cautiously. Louis did not see me. He was doling out the food, and I saw that it consisted of boiled plantains.

Then, still holding my steaming kettle, I stepped rapidly into the ring of light, and I set the stew down among the squatting laborers.

Louis flung out an arm and screamed at me:

"Go away! Go, and don't interfere with black men's business!"

But already those crouching pickers were thrusting their hands into the pot—my pot—and were dipping up bits of the salted stew. And as they put it into their big mouths, one by one, they rose and drifted away into the forest.

And Louis?

Well, I had him covered with my revolver. He stood there, angry, defiant, and yet with a glint of fear in his sidelong glance.

And Feema, among the trees behind me, moved restlessly. She came closer and put her hand into Louis' supper pot of plantains, and raised a finger to her lips to taste:

"Unsalted, *m'sieu!*" Her frightened voice was triumphant.

Odd, wasn't it?

And each picker, as he ate a bit of salted goat rose and shambled off.

Then, still covering Louis, I said:

"March! We are going to follow those people. I'll walk behind you, and I have my gun ready."

He protested: "I got the pickers for you. And you haven't paid me. Now you've driven them off. It's your own fault if you don't get the coffee in!"

"March!" I repeated, and he glided sullenly ahead of me along the jungle paths; and we walked behind a long silent file of men and women who were going back to their mountain village. But they did not go over the mountain. They went to a place where our own hands lived; and Louis' pickers shuffled along the path between thatched huts while the light of the cooking-fires touched their faces and their stiff bodies.

From the few blacks who were lounging near the huts came terrified cries:

"Father!" "Mother!" "Sister—" and a crowd of people clustered around the pickers, calling, clinging, pleading for recognition. But the workers stalked on unheeding, dumb, deaf, dead.

They went straight through the little village, out to the graveyard that had been so recently filled; and as they reached it each one flung himself down and began scrabbling the earth and pebbles away from the graves. They dug with their hands; they were like anxious animals. And they did not speak. The only sound was the *scratch, scratch* of their claw-like hands in the earth.

THEIR relatives stood close, softly wailing; and in front of me Louis waited, hard and cold. Waited for what? I did not know.

I fell to thinking that I should have become better acquainted with the estate-hands. If I could recognize a face among those digging forms, why, the zombie business would be proved beyond a doubt. But the estate was large—there had been many blacks . . . I had not seen one-half of them before the epidemic. . . .

The moon was rising and its light fell on those figures scraping desperately in the earth. . . . The holes deepened. . . . And the

shallow graves that had been marked with rude crosses, were all *empty*, until Louis' pickers slid into them. And then each body was a rotting corpse. . . .

Yes. That is what I saw. Perhaps I was hypnotized. Perhaps it was a dream. But that is what I saw.

I left Louis. I forgot him. Sick with horror I fled down the mountain-side and Feema was close behind me.

THROUGH my head was spinning all the horror of all the zombie stories I had ever heard. . . . Stories of dead bodies ravaged from their graves by witch-doctors, to be forced to labor in the fields without pay. Dead men who could only be released from their ghastly enchantment by the eating of meat and salt. . . .

"I'm delirious! I have a touch of fever!" I told myself as I stumbled into the house and flung myself down at the table where the reading-light burned so cheerily.

Terrified and quaking, Feema had followed me, to crouch beside my chair.

The lamplight spread a wide shaft of yellow brilliance through the open door, and out into the warm, still night.

We did not speak, Feema and I. But presently her eyes sought mine as we heard a murmur that increased in volume until it resolved itself into the babbling of human voices and the scuffing of bare feet.

Into the shaft of light at the veranda edge came a surging mob of blacks, hardly visible except for a gleam of an eye-ball here, a glistening row of teeth there, a highlight on a cheekbone. . . .

The light fell fully on something that was held on a stake high above the group of living men.

It was a bleeding head. Yes. Louis' head.

One man stepped forward to the veranda edge, and he looked up at me as I went to the door:

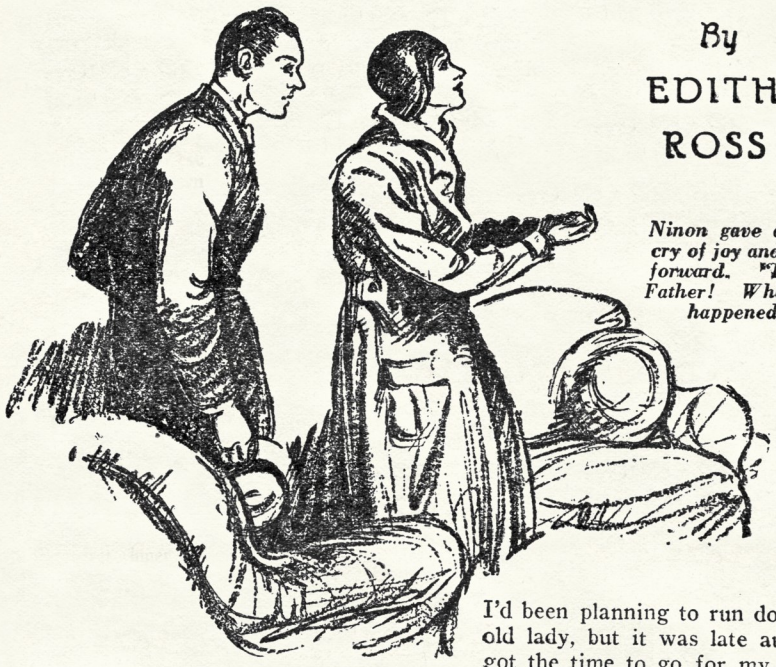
"Massa, you've saved our dead from the witch-doctor, Louis. You have put them back in their graves—our fathers and our mothers and our sons and daughters. You have put them back for us. Now, those of us that are left will work hard for you. We will get the coffee picked because the zombies have gone to their earth beds."

The head on a stake went down in the crowd. It disappeared. The men and women moved silently away into the darkness.

Feema and I understood.

A Lost Soul's Vengeance

By EDITH ROSS



Ninon gave a sharp cry of joy and sprang forward. "Father! Father! What has happened?"

IT'S mighty odd, but in every man and woman, there's a little sixth sense that warns of danger and peril. A hangover from more primitive times, I suppose, and now almost extinct from lack of use. But it's there, just the same, and at the crucial moment, it begins ticking out its rapid message of "Danger—beware—danger—beware."

When I stood with Ninon that terrible night of storm, in the black, draughty hall at Grey Gables, and heard those slow dragging steps on the stair, coming down, nearer and nearer, this instinct sprang to life like an abrupt flare of red. Warning! And if I had heeded. . .

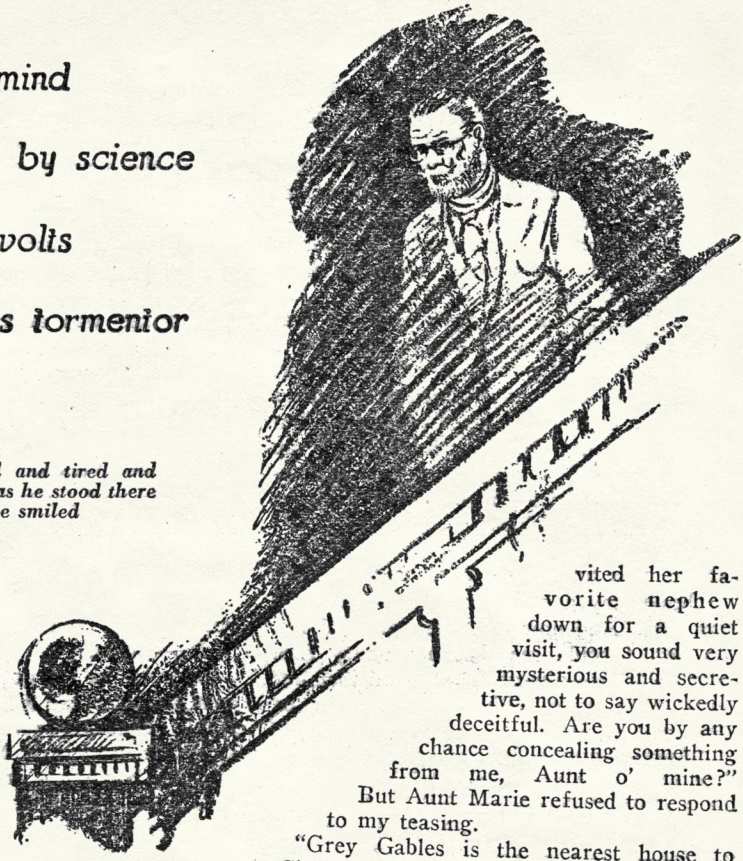
Well, I suppose I might as well start back at the beginning. And that was when I told Courdlandt that I wouldn't be back at the office for a week as I was running down to Burning Woods to stay a bit with my Aunt Marie, and rest.

Ever since I'd been back from Germany, I'd been planning to run down and see the old lady, but it was late autumn before I got the time to go for my visit. No lawyer's time is his own, particularly when he's young and ambitious and with his own way to make. I was pretty tired, too, and I anticipated a fine quiet loaf, and absolute rest. Relaxation, you know. . . .Which goes to show how much a fellow knows of what the immediate future holds for him!

The first two days of the visit were a grand success, and just what I had dreamed of. Autumn woods of scarlet and gold, soft haze and wood-smoke, open fires at night and morning, the big living room open to the soft air, and its tables littered with books and magazines.

On the third day, the weather broke. I awoke to the sound of rain on the roof. Persistent, monotonous, beating down out of gray skies. Toward night it deepened into a storm that rose to a shrill fury of wind and water. Pretty wild and bad. A good night to stay indoors. It made the long, softly lighted living room cozier and more homelike by contrast.

A mind destroyed by science revolts against its tormentor



He looked old and tired and slightly dazed, as he stood there —but he smiled

Aunt Marie sat beside the rosy lamp on the table, knitting some soft blue affair, and I lounged before the fire, half dozing. A picture of peace.

Once, Aunt Marie got to her feet and crossing to a window, tried to peer through the darkness. But she sighed, as she sat down again, and, with a sleepy curiosity, I asked her the reason.

"It's Ninon," she said. "She wrote me a note from town. I got it this morning. Travis brought it out from the village with the groceries. She asked me to go over to Grey Gables and see if the Professor was there, and then to telephone to her. Of course, I couldn't get there at all, with this storm and my rheumatism. And I gathered that she didn't want me to send anyone else, for some reason or other. Oh, I wish I could have gone over there! Oh dear, I wish I could!"

Her voice was filled with such distress, that I sat up straight and turned to look at her.

"Just who is this Ninon," I asked, "and the Professor? And where and what is Grey Gables? For an aunt who has invited her favorite nephew down for a quiet visit, you sound very mysterious and secretive, not to say wickedly deceitful. Are you by any chance concealing something from me, Aunt o' mine?"

But Aunt Marie refused to respond to my teasing.

"Grey Gables is the nearest house to Clover Cottage," she explained. "It's about half a mile from here. It belongs to Professor Jarvin—you know, the Jarvin that you read about—that's had so much to do with these new gland discoveries. He's really our only celebrity, in this part, and he has used Grey Gables for his summer home for years and years. Why, Ninon—that's his daughter—practically grew up there. Professor Jarvin has been a widower for years, and I must confess that my own daughter couldn't be much dearer to me that Ninon is. But I wasn't deceiving you, Hugh dear. There's never anybody at the Gables at this time of the year."

"BUT just why," I demanded, "is this Ninon so worried over the whereabouts of her father? He seems to me, from the little I have heard about him, to be a gentleman eminently qualified to take care of himself. Don't you feel that possibly your Ninon is unduly excited, when she asks you to sally out and hunt up her escaped parent?"

"I do wish you wouldn't tease," Aunt Marie said, her sweet voice troubled.

She was about to add more, when a sudden scrambling rush on the porch stopped her. We both turned toward the door, but before either of us could rise, it burst open and a little dripping rain-soaked figure literally blew into the room. It was so *apropos,* and yet so extremely unexpected that it might have been a clever, well-timed stage entrance.

But the girl in the open doorway was oblivious to dramatic effects. Before I could rise to help her, she flung herself against the door and forced it to close. Then she turned and faced us, jerking her soggy little hat from her head. I got an impression of a mighty pretty brown-haired, brown-eyed girl, but she didn't give me much time to look.

SHE was across the floor and kneeling beside my aunt before I had recovered my wits. And now that the light fell full on her, I could see that her pretty face was colorless—almost ashen—and that her eyes were wide with an expression of fear and terror.

"Auntie—auntie Marie," she said, and her voice was almost the frightened wail of a child, "where's my father—have you seen him—do you know? Is he at the Gables—have you seen him. . . ."

"Why child—why Ninon," my aunt Marie's eyes were wide behind her glasses and her voice was filled with consternation, "how did you get here, dear? Why, you're literally soaked! Your little shoes are full of water! Ninon, my dear—what made you come away out here to-night, in this mad fashion?"

But Ninon refused to be diverted by her own state.

"My car broke down at the edge of Gleason's Lane," she said absently. "That's how I got wet." And then, again, insistently, "Father—my father. Do you know where he is, Auntie Marie? I've hunted and hunted—I've gone every place—all day. I can't find him—and now I know he must be at Grey Gables. Though how could he go there after. . . .Oh, didn't you send someone to look this afternoon? I phoned—or rather, I tried to—but the wires are all down, from the storm."

"Why no, dear, I didn't send anyone. I gathered that you wanted me to go myself, for some reason or other, and it's been so bad I couldn't get out. Oh, Ninon, I'm frightfully sorry! But why should you be so terrified? Surely no harm can come to your father, at Grey Gables, of all places. There, there, don't be so excited! Now let's get some of these wet things off!"

But the frantic girl resisted my aunt's kindly hands.

"No, no," she cried, "Oh, don't you understand—I must go on! I must get to Grey Gables! Oh, something's happened—something's happened! I must go—now!"

And she was actually darting for the door, when my Aunt rose and laid hold on her with no uncertain clutch.

"Ninon," she cried, her voice exasperated. "This will never do! You'll be sick from exposure, and you can't go through the woods alone to Grey Gables, through this storm and darkness. Be sensible, child. Wait, and we'll try again to get the house by phone. Perhaps the wires aren't all down, after all. There now, be quiet. Hugh, come here! Ring for Annie to bring some hot tea, and then help me with this coat! There—there!"

Between us we got her to give up the coat, and I spread it before the fire to dry. Annie responded promptly with the hot tea, and after a cup of it, Ninon stopped shivering, and her hands grew steadier. But her eyes were still filled with terror and her sensitive little mouth twitched.

I might as well admit right here that she appealed to me from the first instant I saw her. She was so young, so pretty, and still brave enough—generous enough—to plunge back into the storm and continue her journey of rescue for her father.

My Aunt kept up a cheerful, soothing patter, as she took off the soggy little shoes, held the tiny feet to the blaze to dry and warm them.

"Here, Hugh," she said, "Ninon, lamb, you've heard me talk of Hugh whom I'm so fond of, haven't you?"

NINON gave me a little wavering absent smile. I doubt if she really saw me at all. When my Aunt Marie at last decided that the girl was quiet and rested enough to talk, she began to question her. Ninon's big eyes filled with tears, but she made a courageous effort and told a coherent story.

"I don't know what's been wrong with father, the last week or two," she said, "but I do know there's been something terribly, terribly wrong. I can't understand, at all. One night, he bade me good-night, cheerful, gentle, his own nice self—and the next morning he got up so different—a

changed man! It doesn't seem possible—but it's true! He was absent, cross—oh, Auntie Marie, I know it sounds silly—ridiculous to say it, but he has really acted as if he was afraid!

"Yet, what could he find to be afraid of, in our little apartment in town? But he was afraid—I know he was—hideously afraid, at that! And yet— He wouldn't leave the apartment, either, even to go to his laboratory. He cancelled all his classes. Auntie, he just sat there—sat there, brooding, staring about him, hour after hour. And at night, he kept every light in the place going, full tilt—and I know he didn't sleep at all.

"He prowled up and down—up and down. Sometimes he carried his gun—once he threw it across the library and broke the glass in front of a case of books. The crash woke me, and when I ran to him, he was standing there, by the door, with his hands over his face. When he took them down—Auntie!—I'll never forget the look on his face—never, never! Stark, tragic fear!

"And, Auntie Marie, he talked to somebody, too. I used to wake up in the night and lie there listening. But there was no one there besides ourselves! Nobody else! Nobody to answer him!

"Auntie Marie, I'm so terrified! What's it all about, anyway? What's the matter with him? What has changed my daddy so much?"

Her voice rose hysterically—broke. She was silent for a moment, then continued, holding herself well in hand.

"I tried to stay awake, last night," she said. "I felt somehow as though he needed me, even though he wouldn't talk to me—just kept telling me to go away, go away quickly, while I could. But I had been awake so much, I was so worn out and tired, that I did drop off to sleep finally, and when I awoke in the early morning—he was gone! The hallboy on night duty said he had come racing down the stairs into the lobby and plunged through the front door into the dark, without a word. That was about one o'clock.

"And I sent you the note—I thought of Grey Gables, of course. And yet, he seemed to be afraid of the Gables—oh, I don't know! I've hunted and hunted, and I can't find a trace of him anywhere else—his clubs,—the libraries, the Dwain Memorial—I've phoned—and gone to all— I can't find a trace of him anywhere else—and yet I know he was afraid of the Gables—but he must be there. . . ."

Again her voice broke. She was such a pathetic little thing, huddled there before the fire. The man who would treat her as her father apparently had must have been a brute.

But she gave us scant time to sympathize or advance theories. Almost as soon as she had told her story, she was on her feet, stamping into the stout little boots that Annie had brought from my Aunt Marie's room at her order. I rose and silently got my coat and cap. Aunt Marie spoke doubtfully, her hand on Ninon's arm.

"Wait a minute, dear," she said. "If you must go, I suppose you must. But of course, Hugh is going with you. See, he is ready now! I only wish I could go with you myself."

I WILL admit that I was eager for the adventure, when I set off finally, with Ninon. It seemed a fine thing to be going out into the storm and night with such a brave, pretty girl, to help her on her errand. But it was a wild escapade, along that soggy, slippery little path, through the woods, with the tree-tops thrashing and twisting above us. Ninon seemed to know the way for she went with the ease of long custom. She spoke once, as we battled along.

"I knew the telephone wires were down," she said, thinking aloud. "It was worse than useless for Auntie Marie to try to get Grey Gables. I've been trying at intervals, all day. Once I thought I had gotten through. That was this morning. I could have sworn I heard my daddy say 'hello'—then there was the most hideous sound! I—oh—I can't describe it! It must have been the storm and the wires—and yet—oh, it was a terrible sound! And after that—there just wasn't anything! Only

silence! There was no answer at all."

It was a short cut through the woods, but it took us long enough at that to get to Grey Gables, through the tearing, drenching storm. To me, the absolute blackness of the big house, a blacker bulk in the surrounding darkness, seemed ominous Huge, stark, storm-swept, deserted. There was no light in the house at all, that we could see from the outside. Ninon, with the swiftness of habit, fitted a key into the great front door, and I swung it open for her.

AFTER the stir and tumult outside, the hall seemed deathly still by contrast. A waiting, deadly sort of silence it was.

And now, that little instinct of which I spoke, sprang into activity, as I stood there in the warm darkness of the hall. It was ticking "danger—danger—danger" just as regularly as a clock.

Ninon groped for the light switch. But when she touched it, nothing happened. Evidently the electric light wires were out of commission, too.

"There are candles and matches on the table in the hall," Ninon spoke in a low, nervous voice. "Here—give me your hand! I—I don't like it in here! It feels—it feels just like it did at home!"

Clutching my hand in a tight grip, she led me across the hall. She felt among the things on the table and finally struck a match, holding it to a long white candle. A tiny light sprang out in the darkness. By contrast it rendered the rest of the vast hall more eerie and dark. But Ninon had no thought for sensations. She turned down a passage to the right, and went rapidly along it to the door at the end. Here she knocked.

"It's father's laboratory," she explained as she rapped on the panels. "It's where he stays most of the time, when we're down here. Working, you know. If he's here at the Gables at all, he will be in this room, I'm sure."

She knocked again. Again and yet again. But there was no answer.

"I don't believe your father is in there," I said, "though of course, he might be, and —and—be asleep. But hadn't we better look through the rest of the house, before we try to open the door?"

Ninon hesitated, then shook her head.

"No," she said, "I've got to see if he's in there. That's where the only connected phone is kept, when we're not down here. Somehow I feel—oh, I don't know how—but I just feel that he's in that room! I've got to get in there, I tell you, I've got to! Now! To know!"

"Very well," I said, "I suppose it doesn't make much difference where we start our search, anyway. I'll see what I can do to the lock."

Ninon held the candle while I tried various ways of opening the door. But it held firmly, and I began to see that I would have to break it down, to gain entry for us. I straightened up to say as much to Ninon, but she was standing alert, her face lifted up—up. Listening.

"Listen!" she whispered, "Listen! Don't you hear somebody—something—Listen!"

I obeyed. Sure enough I caught it—a stirring—a slow faltering footstep somewhere in the dark depths of the great house. On the floor above us, I would have said. Approaching the stair. . . . Coming down. . . . We could hear its halting progress on the polished stairway.

Now, there wasn't anything in that to make me so suddenly sick with horror. A slow, faltering foostep on a stair. Considering the fact that we had come to Grey Gables to find an old man, it was to be expected. And yet, as we stood there huddled close together, I was filled with an insane fear. That little instinct struck up more fiercely "danger coming—danger coming—danger coming!"

Ninon must have felt something of the same sort. I heard her draw a deep breath, and her little hand shook so, that I took the candle from her, fearing that she might drop it.

She turned and looked into my face. Her eyes were dilated—black, in the candlelight. Her lips were colorless. But she said nothing. We went back up the passage together, and at that minute, the electrics sprang back into commission. They flashed on, and the hall was flooded with light.

NINON gave a sharp cry of joy and sprang forward. For, standing on the stair, was a man. He looked old and tired and slightly dazed, but he smiled as he stood there—smiled at Ninon.

"Father!" Ninon cried. "Father! What has happened? Why did you go away last night—with not a word to me! Is there anything wrong?"

He put out a hand to ward off her too ardent advance, and she faltered to a stop at the foot of the stairs. But he still smiled,

slowly—and then he spoke. And at the sound of his voice, Ninon shrank abruptly back, as from a blow.

I did not blame her. For there was an odd, rasping grind underlying his tone, a mechanical toneless utterance, that made his voice a hideous thing to hear. It was as if a door from a nice normal room of lights and warmth were thrown open on a welter of black chaos and terror and direst peril. That is as well as I can describe it for you.

But his words were commonplace enough.

"Wrong," he repeated, in that terrible, cold voice that seemed to have no slightest connection with himself. "Wrong? Why, what could be wrong? Surely you found the note I left in the apartment for you."

Ninon did not reply for a minute. Her face was a white mask of incredulity and fear and puzzlement.

"You left no note for me," she said at last slowly. Then, "Father, what is wrong? Oh, I know—I *know* there's something! What is the matter with you—with your voice?"

The Professor made an impatient gesture. He came down the last few steps, moving with the detached, stiff action of an automaton. And for some reason, I felt as if a cold draft, a gust of icy black air swept across me as I stood there. I shivered involuntarily.

"There is nothing wrong with my voice," he said, "except perhaps, a little cold. Don't be imaginative, Ninon. Did you come all the way up here because you did not find my note?"

"You left no note," Ninon repeated automatically. Her eyes strayed down from his face and she started.

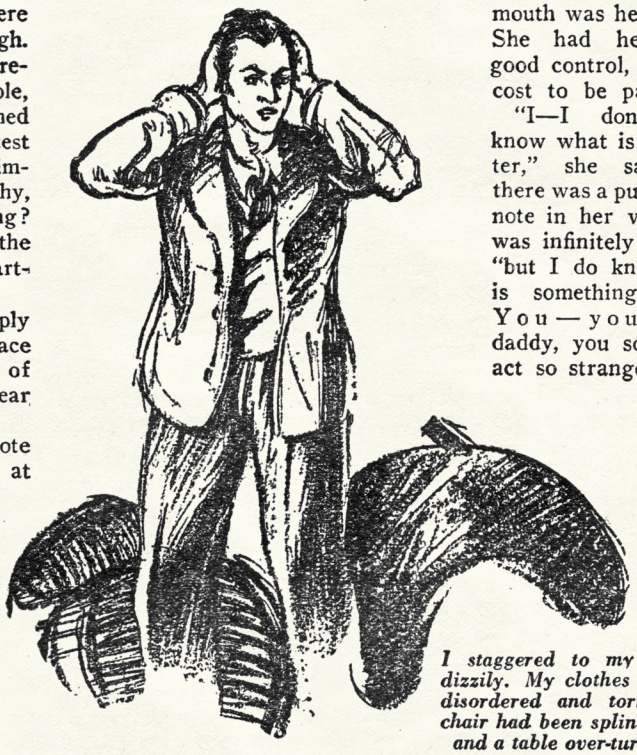
"A cold," she said, "Oh, daddy, is that the reason you have your throat bandaged? Is it sore? Does it hurt you, dear?"

The Professor put one hand up to the neat bandage about his throat.

"It doesn't hurt me, just now," he answered, "but it has been—very painful. However, that is neither here nor there. You are wet—wet through. If you keep those clothes on, you will be ill. Hadn't you better go to your room and change immediately? We can talk after that."

Ninon stood very still for a minute. Her eyes were wide—opened to their fullest—and they were almost black. Her little mouth was held firmly. She had herself in good control, but at a cost to be paid later.

"I—I don't quite know what is the matter," she said, and there was a puzzled lost note in her voice that was infinitely pathetic, "but I do know there is something wrong. You — you — why daddy, you sound and act so strangely!"



I staggered to my feet dizzily. My clothes were disordered and torn; a chair had been splintered and a table over-turned

Professor Jarvin made a sound indicative of impatience.

"Ninon, you're being foolish! Come and get into dry things at once. Hurry!"

AT the command, Ninon moved past him, and began slowly to climb the stair. She kept looking back at us as she went. At last she was out of sight around the turn in the staircase.

"We will be waiting in the library," the Professor called after her. "Come down when you have changed."

Then he turned to me, with a smile. His movement was rendered awkward by the stiff, tight bandage that circled his throat, too closely, it seemed to me, for comfort.

As he came nearer, I noticed that his eyes were sunken far in his head. They were a dull, slate gray, expressionless, dead-looking, save for a little glow that flickered in their muddy depths.

"I think it is a little warmer in the library," he said. "Shall we wait there for my foolish little girl? I had no idea that she would not find my note—that she would risk such a storm to come to me here. But Ninon is a very unexpected child indeed. Wait, I will turn on the lights, though how long they will stay, I can't prophesy. I must thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking charge of my little Ninon on this mad errand."

TALKING amiably, the Professor threw open the door of the great dark library, and touching the switch on the wall, flooded the room with light.

Now, I am not a coward, but I will say, that if I had done as I wanted to, instead of as convention demanded—if I had heeded that little pulse that kept beating out its message—"Danger—take heed—danger—beware" I would have turned from the threshold, and fled back up the stairs to Ninon. But how could I have explained such a move?

And, in the meantime, there was Professor Jarvin, a famous scientist and writer, courteously waiting to usher me into his library, as he would any guest.

I passed through the massive door, and the Professor swung it shut behind us. With that same curious stiffness of movement, he motioned me to a chair. I seated myself, but he remainded standing. Absently, he picked up the long poker, and stirred the few dying embers in the fireplace. He replaced it in the brass rack—and swung around on me with incredible speed and fury.

I had one glimpse of his face as he plunged, lightning-like across the room towards me. It was transformed—the ferocious blood-thirsty mask of an escaped fiend. Its snarling menace was lighted by the blazing madness of those sunken eyes. Hideous, wicked, vicious.

I half rose from my chair. But he was on me before I had a chance to defend myself. He snarled like a mad animal, and his long cold fingers seemed to have the strength of steel and the agility of writhing snakes. Cold—cold. I was conscious of it, even in the desperation of my struggle. It was as if my ghastly opponent were wrapped in a shroud of icy air.

We fought. I know I gave a strangled, despairing cry or two. But I knew from the first instant that I had no chance. I am strong, and I was less than half the other man's age—yet I was as a child in that frightful relentless grip of those icy fingers. I heard the crash of over-turned furniture.

Once—that was just before I lost consciousness—I struck, feebly enough this time, at his jaw. There was little strength behind the blow—but it separated the neat folds of the bandage. And his head did not straighten up again. It continued to loll loosely back. My horrified eyes caught a glimpse of a long, bloody gash across his throat—and that terrible loose-swinging head!

The frigid fingers did not relax their grip on me for an instant. They pressed deeper and deeper into my throat, in spite of my frantic efforts to pull them loose. The room blurred—blackened. I sank fathoms deep. At the very last I had an instant's glimpse of that hideous lolling head.

When I came back into consciousness again, I was still lying on the floor of the library. But I was not alone. I could hear voices long before I gathered sufficient strength and interest to open my eyes. Someone held a glass of water to my lips. I struggled to drink. And sure enough, when I at last fought back enough to open my eyes and sit up, there were three men in the room—policemen.

Ninon and a gray-haired big man knelt beside me. The man nodded as he rose.

"YOU seem to be coming around, all right," he said cheerfully. "Take it easy a bit, though. I am Inspector Gratton, and these two are my men. What happened to you, anyway? You must have had a terrific fight with somebody. Where is he—the other fellow?"

Ninon was looking down at me.

"I heard a crash—and I heard you cry out," she said, "so I came. But for the longest time, the door wouldn't open. I beat upon it—I called. . . . Then the police came."

I staggered to my feet dizzily and sank into a chair. I looked about. My clothes were disordered and torn, and on the crumpled rug was a splintered chair, and an over-turned table. There had been a fight, right enough, even if my aching

throat had not testified to the fact. But nowhere was there a sign of the Professor. I turned to the men.

"Where is Professor Jarvin?" I asked in a hoarse whisper.

Inspector Gratton regarded me with a curious expression.

"That, my dear sir, is the question. Where is Professor Jarvin? In fact, that is what brought me here. *Where is the Professor?"*

Ninon shuddered as he repeated my questions and crowded closer to me. She laid a poor cold little hand in mine, and I held it tightly. In the tense silence, I could hear the shrill screaming of the storm as it beat and tore at the Gables.

I turned to the Inspector.

"I don't know where Professor Jarvin is at this minute," I said, "probably hiding somewhere in the house. But we've got to find him, right away. The man's a raving maniac! It was he who attacked me! Why, he leaped on me like a wild beast, as soon as we were alone together in this room! Better be careful, for when you find him, he's liable to do anything."

Ninon was white to the lips. But she faced the Inspector courageously.

"I'm afraid Mr.—Mr. Hugh—" she hesitated over the name, and I remembered that she knew only what she had heard my aunt call me—"I'm afraid he's right. . . ."

And she sketched briefly for him what she had already told my aunt and myself. At the end of her story, Inspector Gratton nodded, completely satisfied.

"YOU may be right as to his insanity," he said, after listening carefully. "But to me, he acts more like a man in the grip of a deadly fear. A man driven desperate by fright of the most terrible nature. His actions are a bit too logical for insanity. I think he came down here to-day for some very good reason. . . ."

"By the way," I interrupted, "just how did you come to be here so opportunely?"

"A telephone call," responded the Inspector, and his voice was grim and harsh. "And while the time of the visit was opportune for you, it means the hell of a mess for me. That message came through at ten o'clock this morning—and was mislaid. A mighty urgent appeal for help it was, too."

Ninon gave a little strangled cry.

"What time this morning—exactly what time?" she asked.

"Between nine-thirty and ten—nearer nine-thirty though," the Inspector answered.

Ninon's eyes widened. She put a hand to her trembling lips.

"That's—that was just before I got that call through—when I thought I heard that —terrible sound—you know? Before the wire went down!"

Her voice broke off in a wail.

"Oh, then there *was* something—some terrible thing! And he tried to get help—and failed! Daddy! Daddy!"

She buried her face in her hands and sobbed. Over her bowed head Inspector Gratton shook his own head gravely.

"Someone'll pay for this negligence," he said harshly. Then he swung on the two men. "Get busy! Search this house! We've wasted too much time here, already! Hustle now!"

THE men moved to obey. But as one of them opened the door of the library, the electrics died out and the place was again plunged into deepest darkness. I heard the Inspector curse the storm. But he and his men had electric torches, and with the help of these Ninon and I lighted two huge wax tapers that stood on the mantel. Ninon clung to me as we followed the men from the room, and once she stepped forward and touched Inspector Gratton on the sleeve.

"This way," she said. "This is the room I'm sure you ought to search first. It is my father's laboratory, which he always uses for his experiments and his work when we are at Grey Gables. If he's still in the house, this is the place where he would most surely be."

"I'm not so sure of that," Inspector Gratton answered. "If he really is insane, he has a fund of cunning and caution that might warn him away from it. But there's no harm in looking here, first."

Under his expert manipulation, the lock on the door yielded and the door swung inward. The blackness of the room revealed was so oppressive, so dense, as to be almost a tangible thing. I had no desire to be the first to cross that ominous threshold, but Inspector Gratton evidently had no such tremors. He stepped within, and swung his searchlight in an arc about the room.

He stepped hastily back into the hall, and opened his lips to speak. Then his glance rested on Ninon, and he hesitated.

"Better get her back to the library," he said in a low tone to me. "Hurry up, too."

But Ninon heard and answered, her voice firm, determined.

"I will not go. If there is anything in the room, I have a right—oh, I'm not going away! You can't send me!"

Inspector Gratton looked at her uncertainly. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"Have it your own way," he said shortly. "I haven't any time to waste arguing with you."

He motioned to the two men, and plunged back into the room. I put my arm about Ninon's shoulders, and we followed. She was shivering convulsively.

INSPECTOR GRATTON swung his torch around until its circle of light quivered —stopped—focused on a man lying on the floor. The other two gleams reinforced it, and under their combined light was revealed the grotesque form of Professor Jarvin.

He lay in a curious twisted way, his head bent far back. . . . His throat had been cut.

A pool of dark clotted blood surrounded him. His eyes were wide and staring, and the expression on his face!—may Providence protect me from ever seeing such stark terror on any other face, alive or dead! It haunts me yet!

Ninon made a little moaning sound, grew limp, staggered. I caught her as she fell, and carrying her, laid her on the long sofa by the door.

"Fainted," remarked the Inspector in a matter-of-fact tone. "I thought she would, at that. Just let her lie a minute, will you, and come here? Enough to make even an old hand like me a bit jagged, and that's a fact."

He motioned to the dead man.

"I take it, this is the man we're looking for," he said inquiringly.

I nodded, unable to speak. He knelt on the floor by the body. His swift fingers lifted, pried, examined. Finally, without rising, he sat back on his heels and looked up at me. His voice was both stern and puzzled.

"There's something mighty queer about all this," he said, slowly, thoughtfully. "Didn't I understand you and the young lady right? Didn't you both just finish telling that Professor Jarvin was here, alive, in the house, when you got here, just a little while ago?"

"Alive," I repeated. "Alive? I'll say he was alive! So much so that he very nearly killed me! Why, he fought like a demon!"

Inspector Gratton said nothing for a minute. He turned again and looked at the hideous bloody thing on the floor beside him. His expression was entirely professional, and his tone, when he spoke, was devoid of any expression whatever.

"That's impossible," he said quietly. "Impossible. For this man here on the floor—Professor Jarvin—has been dead for at least six or eight hours—possibly more. *Rigor mortis* has set in."

There was no sound in the room for a minute after that. I heard one of the men draw a long breath, heard the wind raving and shrieking outside.

"You are wrong," I said, as quietly as I could. "I know you are wrong. Both Professor Jarvin's daughter and I saw and spoke with him, not half an hour ago—and my throat is still aching and bruised from his insane attack on me. Crazy,—insane, yes. But not dead."

I stopped short, looking down at the corpse on the floor in that ring of light. There was a bandage about the neck, blood-stained, torn, disarranged. I had a sudden sickening recollection. Before my mind's eye ran incoherent, broken fragments. Ninon's cry. . ."Is your throat sore, father?" —that answer. . ."not painful just now—your imagination"—that neat, close bandage—his stiff-necked, awkward movements —and then, that loose lolling head, after I had hit him on the chin. They all took on a sudden awful significance. Nauseated, faint, I staggered to a chair, and sat down, wondering if I were sane or not.

Inspector Gratton was speaking.

"If you and the young lady are right—then there is another man in the house. But—I do not believe that! Look here!"

He pried open the stiff bloodless clutching fingers of the right hand. They held a tiny, brightly-colored shred of silken fabric. He lifted it from that cold reluctant grip, and getting up, brought it over to me. He held it against my chest.

It was a strip of silk, torn in struggle, from my own neck-tie.

HE gave a low whistle.

"What do you make of that?" he said.

I did not answer. What was there to say? I shuddered, remembering. . . .

One of the men had been examining the room. Now he spoke to the Inspector.

"Come here a minute," he said. "There's some letters or papers of some sort here on the table. Come and see."

Inspector Gratton hurried across the

room. I staggered to my feet and followed. Sure enough, there was a little pile of loose sheets on the table, an overturned chair. There was blood on some of the papers. They were all disarranged, a confused mass. The last sheet was unfinished —broken off in the middle of a word.

Vision if you can, that terrible room. The only lights, two candles, and those three little circles from the electric torches. That frightful thing, lying so hideously quiet in its ominous, dark pool. Ninon, still unconscious, on the couch by the door. The four men bending over that untidy bunch of loose papers. Outside, black night and storm. In this great shadowy room, with its sudden gleams of metal and glass and enamel, a silence more ominous than the wild clamor of the gale as it beat and tore at Grey Gables.

"Let's see what this is all about," said the Inspector briefly. "Looks as though he had been writing—making out some sort of statement, when . . .!

He broke off without finishing. He riffled the papers quickly, with impatient speed. He straightened them with incredible quickness. Then, sitting before the table, he read aloud the statement that Professor Jarvin had evidently been working on when death had leaped upon him:

I, Alton Deaver Jarvin, respected and admired by my friends and colleagues—a scientist and a student—I am a murderer.

And because of it, I am in the most deadly peril. Each day, each night, each hour that passes—but delay the inevitable. Escape I now realize is impossible. He will not be placated. It is the end.

The world knows my work. That by my years of study and experiments in glands I have been of some benefit to humanity, is my only consolation, my only hope in eternity. But the curiosity, the zeal that led me to excel others in knowledge, also led me to commit the most ghastly crime.

Five years ago, I thought I stood on the threshold of a great discovery—the greatest 'find' of the past scientific decade. But for the completion of the experiment of which I dreamed, I was dependent on some subject who would submit to a peculiar operation.

It was not a difficult nor particularly painful affair. And the result of it I felt assured, was brilliant enough to justify any means of attainment. For my success, it was absolutely imperatively necessary that I have a living human subject on whom to work.

I WAS almost frantic with anxiety. How to obtain a subject for my experiment. A man whom I felt would be greatly benefitted by the operation. It was a seemingly insurmountable barrier between me and success. I brooded incessantly over it.

And then Fate threw into my pathway, the very thing for which I had been praying.

One night, here at Grey Gables, I awoke to hear something stirring . . . a tiny rustle. I was alert instantly. I lay silent. The sound was repeated. Yes, it was as I suspected. There was someone, probably a thief, in the room with me. I felt noiselessly for the revolver that always lay on the table at the head of my bed.

I flashed on the light—I had my man covered before he could swing around to face me. It was all so easy that it might have been the often-rehearsed scene from a play.

The man himself was a pale, quiet chap, who tried to explain to me that he was no ordinary thief. He told a pitiful story of poverty and the suffering of his family—of an unsuccessful hunt for work—of this last desperate expedient.

If I had been less fired by my exultation, I think I should have found his plight one to call forth sympathy and aid, rather than punishment. He made no defense; he was too crushed by the successive catastrophes that had descended on him, and seemed to expect punishment as a matter of course. He did not try to prevent my binding him tightly in a chair.

I was indeed in luck. Ninon was with a friend in town, and the three servants were asleep in their rooms above the garage. I was alone with my prisoner.

I dressed calmly, though my hands quivered with eagerness to be at their

coveted task. My captive sat passively, his head sunk on his breast.

I explained to him carefully what I was about to do. I told him that instead of going to a common jail and punishment, he was to be the living demonstration of the truth of my theory. That in time to come he would be feted and honored as the pioneer—the leader of a long procession of humanity seeking the greater powers and the lengthened life I could offer them by my simple little operation.

BUT, instead of thanking me, and being helpful in his attitude, he evinced an anguish and fright which was intensely disagreeable to behold. He roused himself to struggle and plead that I call in the police. Indeed, he was praying, pleading frantically—when I fitted the ether cone over his face.

From then on, it was a most enjoyable proceeding. In the laboratory I performed the simple little surgery required. And, before he came out of the anesthetic, I bound him firmly to the couch, watching him in a fever of anticipation.

When he roused at last to consciousness, he seemed stupid and uninterested, his mind almost a blank. Something had gone wrong!

Instead of the virile, super-man I had anticipated I had produced an idiot. He had become a cretin—degenerate in both body and brain. I was compelled to keep him captive in the laboratory. It was easy enough for he was content to sit for hours in one spot, mouthing and leering. Slobbering and pulling at his fingers.

I was conscience-stricken at first, of course. But later I began to see that science, harsh task-mistress that she is, must be served, even though humanity be sacrificed to that end. Yet, even then, I utterly failed to realize the one great fact. I had harmed this man, irrevocably; I had robbed him of his birthright.

In the years that have passed since then, I have borne a very heavy burden. To plan for the concealment, the care of this Thing which I had produced, was a task to tax the ingenuity and patience of any man. I was helped greatly by my old servant, Gustave. He was the only living person who knew of the presence of the cretin at Grey Gables. And, during my absences, he took entire charge of him.

But, last year Gustave died. Since then, my life has been a nightmare. Daily, weekly, this senseless thing became a heavier and heavier drag on my failing strength and patience. I began to think—why should as brilliant a man as I, allow myself to be so handicapped? Why not rid myself of such an onerous burden?

But I had not the courage to kill the cretin in cold blood. So at last I evolved a scheme. During my necessary absences, I chained the cretin in the cell that Gustave and I had constructed for him under the floor of the laboratory. Here I left large supplies of food and water, enough to last until my return.

But this last time, I resolved to rid myself of this encumbrance at once. So, I left him neither food nor water. I knew he must die, and yet I would not have the unpleasant task of killing him. Indeed, he seemed too much an imbecile even to suffer.

As I said, I forgot one thing. That when he finally died, his soul would be loosened from his body—and that it had become the warped and evil thing that I had made it. With the additional growth of a fiendish malice, and cunning.

In town I waited calmly for the end. He must have lived at least a week and a half.

Then, one night—he died! He came directly to me, upon his release. I was dragged from my sleep by the sense of his silent, waiting presence. When I opened my eyes, there he stood. A presence as solid and human in form as myself, to the sight, but cold, intangible as mist to the touch—and with the faculty for total disappearance at the entrance of any other person.

THAT first night, I fled from the little apartment. I walked the pavements with wild haste—sped, in panic-stricken flight, from the horror. He sped with me, silent, effortless, by my side. His eyes were full of evil, leering knowledge. There was no need for words. He knew and I knew, that he was waiting—waiting with the patience of eternity, for the opportunity to strike.

Under the street lamp, we met a policeman. I stopped and spoke to him, trying desperately to be casual. He replied civilly. I made conversation—any excuse to stand with him in that little circle of light, rather than venture back out into the darkness where lurked that watching, ghastly-smiling thing. But when at last I was compelled to go on, he was with me again. I had known he would be.

I went back to the apartment. I did not venture out again. Somehow the outdoors seemed a less easy place in which to guard myself.

He was with me constantly. I dared not sleep. I spent all my time guarding myself, in pleading with him as he had once pleaded with me. He was merciless. He waited, silently. In the dusk of my little study his eyes glowed phosphorescent.

When I paced the floor, he glided at my elbow. He sat across the card table from me, as I tried to keep myself awake with solitaire. Once, I went mad, I think. I threw my revolver at him. It hit the book-case behind him, splintering the glass. He hovered, grinning, leering, as I cursed and raved.

Once, only, through all that gruesome siege he spoke. Out of the shadows, where he lurked, in the small hours of the morning, his voice came, hoarse, rusty from disuse:

"At Grey Gables, my body lies unshriven, unshrouded, unburied. Go there, and repair what wrong you may yet right."

I resisted. For I feared Grey Gables—intuitively I knew it for my place of doom. Yet I have at last obeyed. What earthly chance had I, to pit my puny will against his?

I have left the apartment. I have come to Grey Gables. I have dug a grave in the earth for that rotting lump of flesh which I robbed of its heritage and birthright. I have even tried to say a prayer—tried—but failed.

As I write, he stands beside me. He stood beside me as I shoveled the wet earth into his grave. And the leer on his face has changed—changed to an even more menacing, threatening expression.

I MUST try to leave Grey Gables at once. Can I leave? Will he let me go? Or is this the spot—the very one in which he lived and died his tragedy—which he has chosen for the reparation. . . .

The telephone has been ringing—ringing. I have feared to pass him, where he stood. So I have not answered. Oh, why—why did I yield? Why did I come to Grey Gables?

If I could reach that telephone! It is a tiny hope . . . I have passed, and repassed him. He did not resist. But his face. . . . I am going mad, that I know. I have called—called for aid He did not even try to stop me. But from his expression, I know it's hopelessness. . . . What waits me if I die—rather, when I die? What punishment in eternity. . . .

The phone again. Ninon's voice—her dear voice. . . . But when I would have spoken to her there came a hand that reached acro . . . .

Here the statement ended. The last page was torn and smeared with the brownish red of blood.

WHAT had happened in that place of terror? Before death came upon him, what had Professor Jarvin seen, to fix on his dead face that ghastly mask of horror?

Inspector Gratton made an examination of the great bare room with its scanty furniture of iron enameled tables and cabinets, its abundance of laboratory fittings. Sure enough, under the flooring we found the trap-door to the cell, in which the poor cretin had been confined.

As we lifted it an odor of decay and death was loosed into the room. None of us had the courage, that night, to investigate it. It was only later, that we descended into its depths, and saw the bare, dark hold, unpaved, unlighted, with a few torn filthy blankets in one corner—with two long chains fastened into the walls. Hideous, pitiful things.

The Inspector left his men on guard, until his return with more help and more lights. He helped me carry Ninon, who was beginning to stir and murmur inarticulately, out to his car, and I held her in my arms, as he drove us back to Aunt Marie's, where he intended to telephone to town.

I laid Ninon on the sofa before the fire, and I was glad when she began to rouse, at last, and I may not tell you the feeling that came into my heart, when her first pale, uncertain response was—to me.

Well—that's what happened at Grey Gables that stormy Autumn night.

I never discussed the affair with any one, beyond the few questions the coroner compelled me to answer, for the simple reason that I do not care to be called a liar or a fool.

Privately, I think Inspector Gratton and the practical class of men he represented, looked on the Professor as mentally unbalanced, and his death as suicide, following the burial of the cretin. Though how any man could have given himself such a blow. . . . However, it was as suicide that

the papers announced his death. For the Professor's statement was kept fairly close, through the influence of some of his former colleagues.

The shallow, hastily-dug grave in which the Professor had disposed of the body of the poor cretin was found that same night by a party of the searchers and guards which Inspector Gratton took back to Grey Gables with him. The body was given a Christian burial. There was never any identification of it.

I have always believed that it was the malicious, distorted soul of the cretin, inspired with a desire for a more sweeping vengeance, that inhabited the body of the Professor, that terrible night. I think that my death would have been but a detail in his hideous scheme of things—that he meant to wreak a vengeance on Ninon for the wrong that her father had done to him. It is a thought that makes me wake shivering in the night—what might have been the fate of the poor little girl, if he had succeeded?

Ninon is my wife, now—has been, for a year. My Aunt Marie took her away with her on a long trip—where they could see lights and people and cheerful movement, and yet be quiet and to themselves. It was all she could do for the dazed, grieving girl.

And it was literally months before I dared to go to them and tell Ninon of all the dreams-come-true that she meant to me. But the past year has been one of great happiness for us both, and I dare to hope that time will finally blur and dim away the memory for her of what happened at Grey Gables.

Tainted Thousands

THE magnificent sum of thirty thousand dollars, a fortune anywhere and a dozen fortunes in poverty-stricken Hungary, has gone a-begging! For according to the belief of those who are in a position to know, a curse hangs upon this money, a curse unholy!

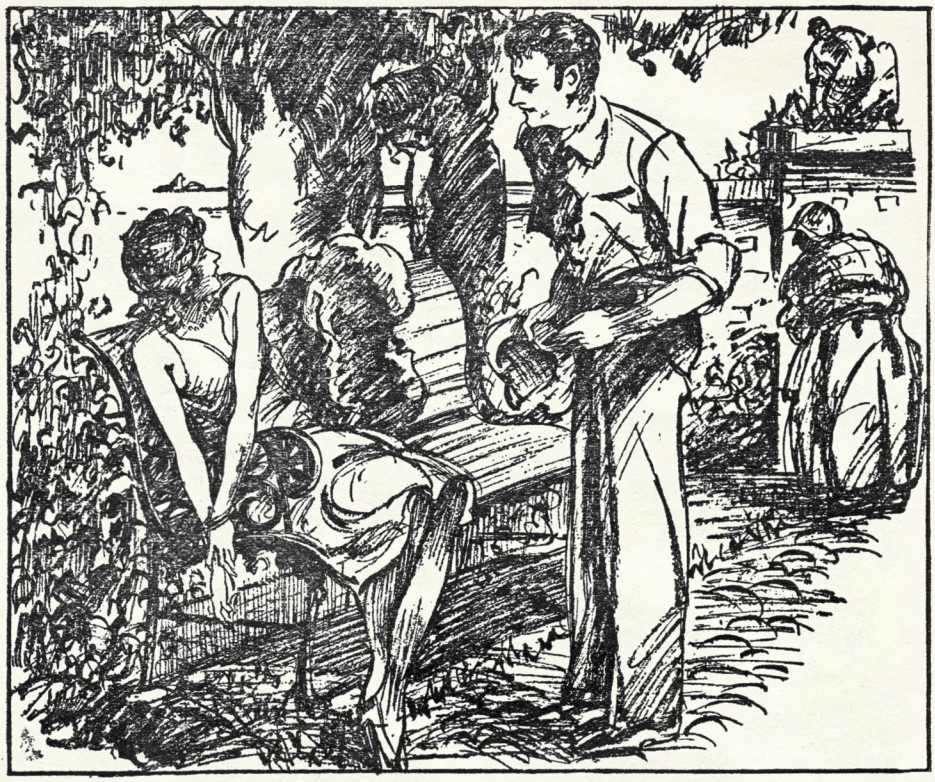
On February 11, 1930, Johann Jungman, the village baker of Rakus village, a hundred miles from Prague, received a lawyer's official communication, bringing the wonderful news that he was the heir of a wealthy uncle who had always disliked him and who had sworn that never a penny should descend upon him. This uncle, Karl Jungman, had been a wealthy dabbler in such shadowy arts as necromancy and search for the philosopher's stone, and there is a record of his arrest and final release on a charge of attending a meeting of Vienna's Black Mass worshippers.

Jungman took the money, arguing that gold was gold, no matter where it came from. The next day he was dead.

His eldest son, Hans, like his father a perfect physical specimen and only twenty-eight years of age, inherited his father's estate, including the baker shop and the fatal thirty thousand dollars . . . still untouched.

Within a week he was dead of an illness not understood by the local doctor. The property, of course, fell upon the younger son, Johann, Junior, who has refused to touch it. Heirs next in line have followed his example, and the money has been placed in chancery and will revert to the state for lack of someone to take it.

Will the curse fall upon the state itself, or not? Has Johann Jungman thrown away more money than he will ever see again in his life? . . . and all for nothing? At any rate, he is satisfied for it to go.



"Pardon, Mademoiselle . . . ? I looked up . . . and saw one of the young men who had been singing under the trees

The Gargoyle's Throat

Beth finds romance, mystery and horror in old France

By STUART PALMER

PROFESSOR ORME, Dr. Nirsk and Beth Churchill receive word at the Professor's home that Penelope, who has heretofore been present while Miss Churchill went into her strange trance, had taken her life. She had been the only person able to understand the language of Luys de Roche—the language of centuries ago—long dead . . . known to them only as Languedor.

Beth, still a student in college, had willingly submitted herself to be hypnotized by Dr. Nirsk and had left her own body while under his influence and relived the tragedies and glories of the long distant past . . . had fallen in love with a gallant cavalier, named Raoul.

The effect of an over-dose of the drug used by Dr. Nirsk to put her into a trance, had sent Beth to the hospital. Upon her recovery she insists that she must go into a trance once more to find out what happens to Raoul. Her roommate, frightened by Dr. Nirsk's influence over Beth, prepares to take her abroad.

Penelope's suicide left them with no one to translate the words spoken by Beth while in a trance.

THERE was a hush. Orme let a piece of paper fall from his fingers to the table. "She took her life," he repeated. "The police heard a splash at the edge of the pier down the street. They found her hat and coat,

with this note addressed to me pinned on top. They came here to let me identify the clothes. . . ."

Dr. Nirsk and I bent over the note, mechanically. It was short. "This is too terrible. . . ." That was all. Just those four words.

"Mine Gott in Himmel!" Nirsk pulled at his beard with quick fingers. Then he whirled on Orme.

"Did they find the wax disk?"

THE older man shook his head. "They searched her room before coming here, of course. I asked particularly about the wax record, but it was not found, either in her belongings or on the pier. She went to her death willingly, and she took the message of Luys de Roche with her!" Orme sank into a chair. "What does it mean?"

The three of us stared at each other. One thought was in each mind, one only. What had Penelope Hammer found in that message from another world and another time that drove her to madness and suicide?

Nirsk rose to his feet and began to pace back and forth. "We've got to repeat the message," he said. "We got to find out what it was that drove that poor woman to suicide. We've got to have another seance!"

I drew back, my fingers at my mouth. To dabble further in the Forbidden was unthinkable madness. "Oh, God, no!" The horror of everything was too much. "No . . . I can't do it. . . ."

I haven't any clear memory of what happened after that. Somehow I must have reached home, somehow I must have slept and wakened and slept again. But mercifully, I was in a daze. The events of the past weeks had been too much for me, and this last added terror was the straw that broke the camel's back. I couldn't have thought clearly if I had wanted to . . . and all I wished for was to forget.

I didn't come back to myself until the salt spray was blowing in through the porthole of our stateroom, and the steamer was far out on the Atlantic. New York was far behind, and I had left with it all my fears. We had sailed for Paris, the goal of my dreams! I must forget everything. . . .

In Aunt Harriet's comforting arms I blurted out the whole story as I have told it here, everything from the first moment in class when I had offered myself as a subject in hypnotism until the last evening when we had gone to Orme's to hear the translation of the wax disk . . . and instead, heard that Penelope Hammer had died by her own hand after solving its riddle! Everything. . . .

Both she and Joan were very kind to me, trying in every way to make me forget the unnerving experiences I'd been through, to make me forget Dr. Nirsk and the message which had come through my lips from Luys de Roche. At first, when they told me to dance and play around with the other young people in the "student third" I thought it impossible, but before the trip was over, I found myself young and gay again.

"We took you away just in time, Beth dear," said Aunt Harriet one evening as I stopped breathlessly at her side, between dances in the ship's ballroom. "If I had only been in New York, I'd have forbidden your dabbling in such things as hypnotism and the like. But anyway, you've succeeded in forgetting all that, haven't you? It's all just an unpleasant nightmare that's passed out of your mind?"

I nodded. "Yes, auntie. Just a nightmare, all of it. I hope I never see any of the people again, or even think of them. . . ."

She looked at me. "If you feel that way, I don't mind telling you that a certain Dr. Nirsk tried to see you the last two days we were in New York, and even came down to the boat. But Joan told me he was mixed up in the thing, and I thought it best to keep all callers away from you. . . ."

"You did exactly right, Auntie darling. . . ." Dr. Nirsk meant only to me all the terrible experiences I had had as a result of that first moment when his eyes had stolen my will power and sent me into a trance. I was awfully glad that Auntie had kept him away. . . .

AS for Raoul . . . I dared not think of him. There was still magic in the name, in the thought of him, in the memory of his face. But to think of him, the specter I had called my "ghost-lover" brought back too many memories of my nightmare experiences. It was easier and wiser to forget. If I could ever forget Raoul.

Perhaps it was a good thing that I started the voyage with my mind in such a turmoil, for though we ran through several storms, I was free from sea-sickness. Aunt Harriet, Joan, and nearly everybody else on board was miserable, but my sickness of the spirit took my mind off such things as a rolling deck, and I was immune.

Then at last, just as it seemed that the voyage would never end in spite of the amusing things and people on board, we caught sight of a splotch to the north that was England. We were entering the Channel, that choppy gray sea that is never still. A few hours more, and the lights along the shore shone through the night.

We were almost there! I was like a child again. Every vestige of my fright had passed. I seemed like a new person . . . like a girl with a new doll.

We reached Cherbourg in the morning and late that afternoon we were in Paris . . . Paris. . . . I repeated the name over and over, saying "Paree" as the French do. I peered from the windows of our taxi as we whirled from the station to our hotel. Aunt Harriet pointed out what landmarks she knew as we went. Then the hotel, surprisingly American in many ways, and even though Aunt Harriet shared something of the tremendous excitement that Joan and I felt, we finally quieted down and went to bed immediately after dinner.

"Paris will wait until morning, girls," was the last thing Aunt Harriet said. "Stop talking and go to sleep."

But I could not sleep. Excitement, and something else, something that resembled foreboding, had taken possession of me. Again I had the familiar feeling that I was only a pawn in a game too large for my comprehension . . . the feeling that I was acting under control of something or someone. It all had seemed fore-ordained back in New York, and I began to wonder if this, too, were not all part of a plan?

Then at last I realized that I was letting myself slip back again, back into the darkness of two weeks ago. I slept . . . and woke to a round of excitement, all fears forgotten in the bright summer sunshine of Paris.

THE three of us went everywhere together—shopping in the Rue de la Paix, an excursion to the ruins at Fontainbleu—restaurants and galleries and shops— If anything could have made me forget New York and the things that had happened there, this would. What girl could have resisted the lure of new dresses, new hats—new shoes—in Paris?

Aunt Harriet, Joan and I were having lunch at a funny little place near the Quai where everybody sat around little tables out on the sidewalk. Auntie looked at me, and then turned to Joan. "I think that we can pronounce the patient cured," she said.

Joan nodded. "Beth dear, you do look so much better than you did back in New York, really you do. You worried me so much. . . ."

It was true, I hadn't given a thought to Dr. Nirsk nor to any of the rest of it for weeks. That was, thanks to Joan and her mother, forgotten. They had both been awfully sweet to me, and suddenly I wanted to do something, right that moment, to show my gratitude. I still had quite a lot of my own money left, and across the street was a shop bearing the legend *Parfums Bizarre.*

"LOOK," I said. "See that odd little place across the street? I'm going to take you there and buy each of you the best bottle of perfume they have. You've been doing everything for me, now let me do something." All on an impulse, I led the way.

The room was tiny, with a table in the middle instead of a counter. As we entered the door a bell tinkled in the rear of the establishment, and in a moment we were greeted by a plump woman of about thirty, groomed as only Frenchwomen can be, with slick hair and an air of style even at home. *"Bon jour,* Madame . . . Mademoiselles. . . ."

I looked around the room, but there were no bottles of perfume in evidence. At the rear was a wall covered with what appeared to be black shoe-boxes. If it had not been for the mingled odors of the Orient which filled the place I should have thought that we had made a mistake and entered the wrong shop.

Aunt Harriet could speak French, and she had to interpret. Immediately chairs were brought for us, and we were seated comfortably around the table. I looked up expectantly, but instead of perfumes, tea was first served to us. Only after this was finished did the smiling madame consent to descend to commercial matters.

"She says that the perfumes here are developed by her husband," Aunt Harriet told us. "And they are sold only here . . . not in the big places. Isn't it thrilling, girls?"

A black bottle, shaped like a cup, was placed in the exact center of the table. *Narcisse blanc,* announced the madame. "White Narcissus."

The cover was lifted, and a subtle, power-

ful perfume filled the air. It was nothing in the world like Black Narcissus that I had known . . . it was thrilling, as Auntie said.

One after another the bottles followed each other, always one at a time and always placed in the center of the table. Some were shaped like animals, some like crowns, some were carved of semi-precious stones. And each contained an odor unlike anything I had ever smelled.

The mingled fragrances filled the little room, and I grew almost drunk with them. I turned to Joan and Aunt Harriet. "Well, which ones do you like?"

THEY couldn't decide. All the odors were so new, so strange, so powerful.

The madame stood waiting. Aunt Harriet explained the difficulty, and suggested that we think it over and return.

"Ah, *non, non.*" Suddenly the madame disappeared and returned with still another bottle, placing it triumphantly in the middle of the table. It was tiny and green.

"She says that this is the very newest thing that they have," translated Aunt Harriet. "Her husband just made it. And it's in a real jade bottle, she says. . . ."

The madame quite evidently did not want to lose the sale. With a sweeping gesture she leaned forward and touched the stopper of the green jade bottle, lifting it with a flourish and waving it under our noses.

"C'est magnifique, non?"

I bent forward to catch it, and suddenly gripped the table with both hands. God! It could not be—it was! It was the perfume which had haunted me in New York, it was the perfume of Luys! I tried not to faint.

The strange, familiar odor brought back everything of what I had tried to forget. It brought back the face of Raoul, it brought back the words of Luys de Roche, it brought back the terrible night when I had heard the news that Penelope Hammer had drowned herself. . . .

The momentary weakness passed, and I suddenly leaped to my feet and rushed from the shop. I felt that I would have died if I had remained there a moment longer. I started to run down the street. I heard Joan's voice calling, but I ran on and on, as if I could leave everything behind me.

It was so terrible, so ghastly . . . to have everything come back that way. I was panic-stricken, I was frantic. Without thinking of the spectacle I must have presented, I ran on and on until I was too tired to go any farther. Straight ahead, without turning . . . still I stumbled on. . . .

Then suddenly a cab pulled up beside me, and Joan jumped out, followed by Aunt Harriet. Obediently I followed them back into the vehicle, still dazed.

"You poor child, you poor darling," Aunt Harriet was comforting me. "Just lean back and rest, nothing can hurt you now. We'll be in the hotel in a few minutes."

"Oh, oh, I'm so . . . so. . . ." I could hardly speak for want of breath . . . "it was the ghost perfume. . . ."

"I don't see that there was anything in that jade bottle of scent to make you dash madly down the street," said Aunt Harriet. "It was just an ordinary bottle of perfume, nothing ghostly about it. Believe me, we had a time following you. It was a good thing that the *gendarmes* here are used to Americans doing crazy things. They pointed to where you had gone . . ."

"You don't understand, auntie," I sobbed. "It was the ghost perfume, the perfume that clung to me after I was in the seances . . . the perfume of Luys de Roche."

Joan shook her head. "It was just a bottle of perfume, Beth. You're sensitive, and you imagine things. It is a little like the perfume I smelled on you after you had been hypnotized back at school, but much stronger. It's nothing ghostly, here, look at it." She slipped the wrapper off, and held out the little jade bottle.

I drew back. "You bought it?"

"Yes, Mother did. Because it was the quickest way to get out of the shop, after you had scandalized Madame by leaping up. See, it's real enough."

Gingerly I took the bottle. It was a beautifully carved little work of art in itself. Even with the stopper closed I could catch the scent which to me meant only one thing . . . Luys de Roche. But here in a taxicab in the heart of Paris, with Aunt Harriet and Joan by my side, it did not frighten me so much.

I TURNED the bottle over. On the bottom was a slip of yellow paper, lettered in black.

"Attar de Vanille, une odeur par Jean, Parfums Bizarre, Rue des——" Attar of Vanilla. . . .

I showed the slip to Aunt Harriet. *"Vanille* . . . that means vanilla in French. . . . I didn't know that they made perfumes

out of the vanilla bud, just as they make a flavoring out of the bean." She sniffed at the bottle again. "But do you know, it is just a little like vanilla, only lighter and softer. I really like it, Beth."

I was bewildered. This was an explanation without explaining anything. The scent no longer frightened me . . . but what connection did it have with the mystical odor which had been so similar, and which had come to me so many times when I was near the Borderland?

"It's yours, Beth," said Aunt Harriet, giving me the little jade bottle. "Take it and keep it to remind you of your needless scare today. It may teach you that the past is all behind you and that there is nothing to be afraid of, now. . . ."

I took the little bottle, although I confess that I did not like to, even then. In a few minutes we were back in the hotel. We had gone to the shop planning for me to buy perfume as a gift for Auntie and Joan . . . now Aunt Harriet had bought me some instead . . . some that I dared not use. It had been an exciting day, I thought, as I laid the little jade bottle away. I was a little tired of excitement. . . .

. . . The little old man fingered the crucifix lovingly. "They do not carve such things to-day"

If I had only known then what was to come! But luckily, we cannot know the future. I might have turned aside and lost my happiness forever . . . and then again Fate might have worked differently to the same ends. Who knows?

The next morning was one of sunshine and a soft south wind. We all decided to forego the galleries and shops for one day, and go to the *Bois* . . . that great green park that rests in the heart of Paris like an emerald. It was good to be out of doors for a few hours, to feel the hot sun on my face and smell the perfumes of the grass and flowers instead of . . . instead of the heady odor of the *Attar de Vanille!* My fears all seemed childish to me as I walked happily along the gay paths and I was totally unprepared for what was to happen.

Joan and her mother had stopped to watch the horses, as they both loved to ride. Coming from Texas, I had a scorn for the short-stirrups of the English saddles . . . riding wasn't riding to me unless it meant western ponies and heavy silver-mounted saddles. Slowly I walked on ahead of them, watching the strolling people around me, watching the clustered nursemaids with their charges, watching the dogs on leash, the tourists, the unaffected Parisians. . . .

I was alone, alone in Paris. Alone, for the first time, except for my headlong flight from the perfume shop. Alone, young . . . and in Paris!

Joan and Aunt Harriet were far behind, out of sight, in fact. I decided to sit down and wait for them to catch up.

A green iron bench caught my eyes, and I sank down on it. The parade passed by, noisily, happily. . . .

Then suddenly my quiet peace was interrupted. An old woman, unbelievably old and ugly, stood before me. She looked like

a witch out of the Green Fairy Book. She peered at me from red-rimmed eyes and croaked something, questioningly.

I was startled, for the moment. But then I thought, "she's asking me the way somewhere. . . ." I shuddered a little, for the woman was as dusty and eternal looking as if she had just come from a museum case.

I shook my head. *"Je . . . Je ne parle pas. . . ."* I tried to tell her that I could not speak French.

SHE did not move, but simply stood there, her face too close to mine, blinking her eyes. Again she squeaked a question, her voice raised.

I shook my head again, a little frightened. I looked around for Joan and Aunt Harriet, but they were still lost back by the bridle paths. No one was in view but a laughing, noisy group of young men in berets, having a picnic on the grass beneath the trees. They were singing a song in French. . . . I can still remember the moment clearly, the old hag growing angrier every moment, and the young men singing a chorus together . . . something about *"pres de ma blond-e."* . . .

The old woman made a motion to me to get up . . . it seemed to me as if she wanted me to follow her . . . somewhere. . . . She raised her hand, as if to strike me . . . and my "oh" must have been almost a scream. I wanted to run, but my legs were weak.

Then in a moment, it happened. Suddenly, so suddenly that I hardly knew how it happened, a young man was speaking, very swiftly and very apologetically, to the old woman. I saw her clutch what he handed her, and with a curtsey, she turned around and trotted off.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle . . . ?" I looked up to thank my benefactor, and saw one of the young men who had been singing under the trees, his beret in his hand and a smile . . . a wide smile . . . on his face. I looked up to thank him . . . and then suddenly I gasped. My eyes opened wide. . . .

Once more the impossible had happened! For this was the face of Raoul, the face of the young cavalier in green who had battled in the shadows of the seance room, who had haunted my heart ever since! This was Raoul, or his double.

"M'selle is *Americaine?"* He smiled so boyishly, so friendlily, that I knew at once that whomsoever he resembled, this was a real flesh and blood young man, not a spectter. *"M'selle* did not know that these benches are rented out by the caretaker, and that one pays a sou for the privilege of resting? The poor old madame was insisting on her *sou,* that was all. . . ."

"Thank you, thank you so much!" At last I found words. "You were so good to me." Now that I looked at him clearly, I saw that he did not resemble the vision of the ghost of Raoul as much as I had thought. It was only that his was the same type of dark, Gallic handsomeness, the same curling, crisp hair. Still, it was a haunting puzzle. . . . Anyway, he spoke English well, though with a heavy accent.

He stood there, this gallant rescuer of mine. I could see that he did not want to go, though his companions were calling him, laughing at him.

"You must let me repay you the money you gave the old woman," I said. "Here it is."

He took the *sou,* and stared at it. Another man would have handed it back, refused it. But he did not. Lightly, deftly, he touched it to his lips, and then placed it carefully in his handkerchief.

"I shall keep this always," he said earnestly, "as a souvenir of the most charming. . . ." He leaned forward a little . . . "of the most . . . in the English I cannot express it . . . of *la dame plus charmante du monde!"*

I had a moment of the most exquisite thrill . . . a moment when our eyes said all that our lips could not . . . a moment when I asked myself . . . "Can this be love at first sight?"

I didn't answer . . . I couldn't answer . . . and there was no need. I knew that what he had said was more than just a graceful compliment, that his voice had been sincere when he spoke. He was different from any other man I had ever known, but we were both young, we bridged the chasm between us with a word, a look. . . .

ALL this happened in a single moment. Then the spell was broken, broken harshly and suddenly.

"Beth! Oh, Beth dear. . . ." It was Aunt Harriet, coming down the path. "Beth, come here. . . ." I stood up, reluctantly. The young Frenchman dropped my hand.

"We meet again?" he whispered. "We must meet again, *Mademoiselle* Unknown. I have much to tell you . . ."

"Beth . . . hurry, dear. . . ." There was an edge in Aunt Harriet's voice. I sud-

denly realized that I was talking to a perfect stranger, to a young man whose name I did not know. It must look terrible to Aunt Harriet, I knew. "Yes . . . no . . . good-by. . . ." I know that I was blushing as I left him and ran across the grass toward the others. When I looked back, he had already joined the noisy group of picnicing youngsters again. But he was looking toward me, too. Our glances met for the last time . . . then Aunt Harriet hurried me away.

As we went, I explained how it had happened . . . how kind it had been of the young man to interfere in my difficulty. Aunt Harriet smiled.

"You are too much of a child to be left alone for a minute," she told me. "Beth, you don't know Frenchmen. They have different ideas about women, you know. You mustn't ever let them scrape an acquaintance with you. It was a good thing we came along when we did. . . ."

I didn't agree with her, but it wasn't the time to say it. If only we had been left alone a moment longer! If only I could have learned his name, and told him mine! For in spite of everything that Aunt Harriet might say, I knew that he had not been carrying on a flirtation. He had been thrilled, even as I was thrilled. He had wanted to know me so desperately that in a moment our acquaintance had leaped across all the usual weeks of friendship and become . . . what? I didn't dare face the answer.

But the memory was sweet, all the same. And his likeness to Raoul only made it seem more magical, more like a fairy story. I began to wonder if the vision of Raoul had not been sent to me to prepare me for this flesh and blood lover . . . if I had not had a presentiment, a pre-vision, of the future.

When Joan and I were alone, she confessed that she thought my unknown young man was charming.

"IT'S thrilling to have things like that happen to one," she told me. "Mother is old-fashioned about such things. But I wish he'd come and spoken to me. I'd have made certain that he found out my name and phone number, at least. . . ." She saw that I was really seriously interested. "Maybe you'll meet him again here in Paris, Beth. Anyway, I'm glad it happened. Things like that are good for you . . . they take your mind off yourself and your troubles back at school . . . back with Nirsk and the rest."

I nodded. In a way it was true. But still I had a strange feeling that somehow everything was all bound up together in some strange way, the thrilling things and the frightening things, the good and the bad. Nirsk and Orme, Raoul and Luys de Roche . . . the handsome stranger in the park . . . even poor drowned Penelope Hammer . . . all of them seemed to be actors with me in this strange melodrama that was my life.

AS soon as I could, I confess it, I slipped back alone to the Bois, hoping to see a certain face again. It was another sunny afternoon, just like the time when we had met.

I walked through the grove where the group of boys had been picnicing. It was deserted now, though the same children were playing along the bridle paths, the same people were riding the same horses. . . . It was deserted, for *he* was not there.

I sat down on the bench where I had been when he came, the bench that had cost me a *sou* that he had kept in his handkerchief above his heart. I wondered if it still was there, or if he had tossed it away already. For a long time I sat there in the sunlight, confident that he would appear. This time I held out the copper coin when my old crone approached me with her hand out, and she passed on with a *"merci"* . . .

It was warm there in the sun. I must have dozed, for I had formless visions like nightmares, all mercifully vague. I saw again the gargoyle's face, I saw the glittering eyes of Dr. Nirsk, heard the voice of Luys . . . and at the end, rising above them all, I saw the face that was both Raoul and my young man of the park. He seemed to be trying to tell me something, trying to convey some message of warning. Then I opened my eyes wide, surprised to see the familiar scene of the park and the children playing.

It was late, and he had not appeared. I laughed at myself for thinking that he would. With one last hurried glance around I picked up my gloves and my bag and prepared to go back to the hotel where I knew Aunt Harriet would be wondering about me.

Then I noticed it . . . the familiar odor that had haunted me so long. It was strong, everywhere about me. It was the perfume of Luys, the scent from the little jade

bottle, the odor called *Attar de Vanille!*

The ghost-scent! And the bottle was laid away in my trunk in the hotel, so it could not be natural this time! My dream, it must have been my dream, had brought back those people from the Other World. . . . Luys was near to me again. . . .

I was surprised to find myself unfrightened now. Something, perhaps it was the meeting with the young man who was, and yet was not, Raoul . . . something had taken my fear away. If only I knew his name! If only I knew where to find him! Even as I wished, something from within myself whispered "all in good time. . . ." So I hurried back to the hotel, hoping that Aunt Harriet had not noticed my long absence.

I FOUND Aunt Harriet and Joan in the middle of the room, clothes scattered everywhere. They were packing!

"Quick," I was told. "Pack your things, Beth. We've got to move."

I stood amazed. We hadn't planned to leave the hotel.

Joan looked up. "Beth, hurry and do as Mother says. It was Doctor Nirsk! He was here!"

"Nirsk?" I repeated the name blankly. All that was behind me. It couldn't be. Doctor Nirsk was back in New York, miles across the ocean.

"Yes," went on Joan. "He found out from the American Express or somebody where you were living, and he came here and demanded to see you. He stayed downstairs for the longest time, and Mother couldn't make him go. We were afraid he'd found you on the street. Beth, you mustn't come under the control of that man again. He's followed you here, and it cannot mean any good for you. Quick, pack your clothes."

So I packed. I was in a daze. Why had Nirsk decided to follow me? Was the man mad? Or was he in love with me, as he said? At any rate, there was only one thing to do, and that was to get away as quick as I could. One glance from those glittering dark eyes, and I knew that I would obey him, horrible as the thought was. My only safety lay in doing exactly as Aunt Harriet said . . . in flying from the hotel as quickly as possible. Perhaps from Paris. . . .

"Where are we going?" I asked as I threw my things into the trunk.

Aunt Harriet explained that she knew a ***pension*** across the other bank of the Seine, where only old French families lived. There we could be out of sight, out of the paths of ordinary American tourists. And there I wouldn't have to see my unwelcome visitor.

I was glad, very glad, that we weren't leaving Paris. Because I loved the city, loved the shops, the theatres, the cafes . . . yes, and because I loved the young stranger who had appeared so suddenly in the *Bois!* I admitted it to myself, I gloried in it. And I knew that somehow, somewhere, I'd see him again. If only we stayed in Paris.

"Doctor Nirsk said he would call again this evening," said Aunt Harriet. "And if he does, he'll find that the bird has flown. And we are not leaving a forwarding address. I have no intentions of having your vacation ruined by that man and his hypnotizing stunts."

Sure enough, by that evening, we were safely installed in a charming little French boarding house among the funny houses of the real old Paris.

This was really new to me. Charming as the shops and cafes of the tourist Paris had been, this was something more. Here we saw no American tourists or English trippers. Here were real Frenchmen and their wives . . . real French nurses and children . . . old soldiers . . . gentlewomen in black . . . unspoiled and untouched by the world.

For the first two or three days we were all naturally fearful of seeing Doctor Nirsk's dark bearded face. But that scare soon was over. It was as if we were in another world. I could hardly realize that somewhere in this teeming city, Dr. Nirsk was searching for me. Again I asked the question, why had he come to torment me further?

At any rate, I was as safe here as I would have been if I had been in China. For no one would ever think of trying to locate Americans in the really French districts of Paris, Aunt Harriet said.

AND so it was that I began to venture out on the streets again, many times alone. I hated to feel that every step that I took had to be chaperoned by Aunt Harriet or Joan. Suppose that I should meet the young man of the *Bois* again?

Every afternoon I used to ramble among the narrow crooked streets of the *Fauberg Ste. Germaine,* which was what they called the place we lived in. Time after time I lost myself among those old-fashioned, wan-

dering alleys. But each time I would call a cab and give our address, knowing that in a few moments I'd have whirled around a dozen corners and been deposited outside our door.

Those rambling streets came to have a real charm for me, a charm that was not felt as strongly by Joan. She wanted to be back in the Americanized Paris, back near Montmartre, back in the tourist haunts. So I walked alone.

Then, one evening just about dinner time, I came upon the little shop with the green shutters. It was almost at the end of one of the countless blind alleys of the district, sandwiched between two big stone mansions. A swaying sign above the door spelled in ancient script the legend *"Curiosités . . ."* and beneath it, in smaller letters the signature "M. Le Mort."

I had been walking for hours, and I was very tired. Through the open door of the little shop I could see a counter and some comfortable benches. The air of the place, though old and musty, was one of restfulness. Indeed, the thought struck me that everything here was asleep, shop and all. . . . I decided to rest inside for a moment, perhaps purchasing some trinket.

In all French shops which are the combined living quarters and places of business for their owners, a bell tinkles in the rear as one swings open the door. But I noticed, as I touched the screen, that instead of that tinkle there was somewhere in the depths of the building a hollow crash from a gong to announce my arrival.

"What a sleepy place this is," I thought to myself as I sat down. I had not realized how tired I was. Everything in the place seemed to carry the atmosphere of rest, of sleep. All the colors were faded and subdued. There was no noise here, not even the buzzing of a fly.

In a moment the proprietor was before me. I looked up with a start, for I had not heard his step. But he was smiling. *"Mademoiselle* would like to look at some curiosities?"

HE seemed to have just awakened, himself, from a long nap. Barely was he restraining a yawn, this weazened little old man who bowed before me. He must have been very ancient, I thought, in spite of his black moustache and beard. Even the top of his head was wrinkled. He was a patriarch of patriarchs, this M. Le Mort.

He had guessed at once that I was American. And strangely enough for so old a Frenchman, he spoke English without the trace of an accent. "Mademoiselle would like to see something in particular?"

I shook my head. "I can't think of anything . . . in particular. Only, please don't show me any perfumes!"

He seemed to understand. "Certainly I shall not. Though I have some particularly unusual scents in Egyptian oils . . . in musk and francincense and the forgotten spices . . . but no." He surveyed his shelves, lined with a potpourri of everything, it seemed, that was or ever had been. There were fabrics, statuettes, and gems. There was armour, and brass, and carved iron. There was Venetian glass, and hammered silver, and the yellow of gold, now tarnished and touched with green.

THERE in the half-light I could not make out the details of his store, but I realized that here was a veritable treasure-house of antiques. If the things were genuine, of course.

He laid an oddly heavy bit of silver before me. "This," he began, " is a beautiful thing, mademoiselle. It is a thing that even I have loved. Observe the carving, worn now, but still beautiful. Observe the softness of the silver. . . ."

I picked it up, that little silver ornament, and suddenly realized that here was something far out of the ordinary. For it was a crucifix!

Yet it was not as other crucifixes I had seen. The central figure had been worn away by the years of handling until it was barely noticeable. The arms of the cross were shorter than I had ever seen them portrayed, and the top of the upright was circular instead of squared off, so that at first the familiar cross shape had not been evident.

Slowly I turned it in my hands. It was heavy, heavier than I had ever seen silver. The thing was not more than six inches long, and there was a little ring at the top so that it could be worn around the neck. I was curiously attracted to the crucifix, not particularly for its religious significance but because of its soft, subdued beauty, because of its difference. I had never seen anything like it.

"And the price of this is . . ." I turned to the proprietor. He looked thoughtful, as if such an idea had never occurred to him. He coughed and yawned.

"Let us say . . . twenty-five hundred francs?"

I placed it on the counter. "You'd better show me something else, then. I couldn't pay that much."

He shook his head sympathetically. "No? Then how much could you pay? Remember, this is very beautiful, very old. Its value is beyond estimate, for there is not another like it anywhere. I know that. Could you pay five hundred francs?"

Twenty-five hundred francs . . . that was about a hundred dollars. Of course I couldn't. "Will you show me something cheaper, please?"

BUT the little old man fingered the crucifix lovingly. "They do not carve such things to-day, *mademoiselle.* Think of its associations. Think of the lovely women of the past who have felt this relic, this charm about their necks. Think of the weight of the silver. . . ." He laid it in my hands again. "I will let you have it, *mademoiselle,* because you are young and beautiful and should wear it, I shall let you have it for a mere trifle of fifty francs!"

I shook my head. "Please show me something else, Monsieur Le Mort. Have you any carved ivory, or perhaps a box that could be used for powder?" I stared through the gathering darkness at the piled shelves. "I'd like to see your Venetian glass. . . ."

Still he handled the crucifix. "This belongs to you by right, *mademoiselle.* Take it at your own price!"

But I hadn't offered any price. And besides, I resented his refusal to show me others of the beautiful things that were just behind the counter. My liking for the crucifix was gone. I didn't want it. I wanted only to get out of such a shop . . . a shop where the proprietor offered crucifixes for twenty-five hundred francs and then came down to practically nothing.

"I must be going," I murmured. "I'll stop in again. . . ."

The old man bowed.

"Yes, you'll be back again," he smiled. "But will you not accept this silver crucifix as a gift from a very old man who is still something of a connoisseur of youth and beauty?" He held out the silver ornament, his eagerness to have me take it quite evident. But there seemed to be something creepy about the place and the old man. I didn't want his gift, I didn't want to stay any longer. My sleepiness, my tiredness, was gone, and suddenly I wanted to be out in the fresh air. I realized that this shop was filled with a thousand musty odors . . . and I began to fancy that the perfume of Luys was among them. . . .

"Au revoir, m'selle," was all the little old man said as I rose. Again the gong clanged in the rear of the shop, again I was out in the crooked street with one end. I hastened towards home, and this time I found my way back to the *pension* without any difficulty.

Up the steps I ran, fearing that I was late for *dîner* again. And as I ran, I noticed that there was something heavy in the pocket of the sport coat I was wearing, something that bumped against my hip. . . . Even as I wonderingly touched it with my fingers, I knew what it was! I dropped it as if it had been hot.

It was the silver crucifix! The little old man had insisted on making good his offer of a gift! But how could he have dropped it in my pocket without my knowing? He had been across the counter. . . .

I stood, bewildered. "Well, anyway I have a souvenir of the afternoon," I said. It had all been very strange and mysterious, but I was safe at home now and nothing could frighten me. Nothing. . . .

I opened the door . . . and stared into the glittering eyes of Doctor Rudolph Nirsk!

Everything whirled around me for a moment, and then I saw that Aunt Harriet and Joan were sitting there. . . . Professor Orme's white shock of hair stood out . . . and that all of them were chatting pleasantly with Dr. Nirsk! In the *pension* parlor!

Orme and Nirsk here! This was the last thing in the world that I would have expected. But to see them friendly with Aunt Harriet. . . .

Doctor Nirsk was on his feet at once.

"Fraulein. . . ." He held out his hand. "Do not be longer afraid, please do not. You have escape me twice, please do not run away now. I haf explain everything to your aunt, and to your cousin, too. . . ."

"PROFESSOR ORME is an old friend of mine, Beth," said Aunt Harriet. "If I had only known that he was the man at whose house you were in the trance, I should not have felt as I did. When Doctor Nirsk brought him here this afternoon, and explained why they both came to France seeking you, I understood. Do not be afraid, Beth. . . ."

I crossed to her side and dropped on a pillow on the floor, my hand on her shoulder. I didn't understand. . . .

"Why . . . why did you come here?" I demanded of Doctor Nirsk.

"It is a long story," he said slowly. "But you remember, of course you remember, how Professor Orme's assistant and friend, Miss Hammer, killed herself rather than give us her translation of the wax disk . . . rather than tell us the message of Luys de Roche?"

I nodded.

"It was terrible, too terrible. I couldn't stand any more of it, I really couldn't. You mustn't ask me to go into a trance again. If the message is lost it will have to stay lost, that is all. . . ."

Nirsk raised his hand. "You do not understand," he said. "We do not wish for you to go into any more trances, my dear *Fraulein*. But we need you."

"How? What for?" I was panicky still.

"Do you remember the sketches that you made when you were in the trance in Orme's office . . . the gargoyle and the other? Well, it is through these, and not through the message, that we must solve the mystery. Even if you were willing to go into the trance state again, it would not be wise for Professor Orme or anyone to try to translate that message supposing that we got it again from your lips in the voice of Luys de Roche. If it drove Penelope Hammer to madness and suicide, might it not touch any of us? But these sketches. . . ." He took out the two scrawls from his pocket, carefully unwrapping them from a folder. "I have found something very interesting about these sketches. . . ." he laid them before me. "Look at this one."

"It's the gargoyle's face," I said slowly. "I've dreamed of it many nights, terribly."

"And this? The one we thought was a meaningless scrawl?"

I shook my head. "It doesn't have any meaning for me."

He smiled.

"LOOK again, *Fraulein*. Observe . . . is not this roughly in the shape of a cross? Does not this line suggest a choir, this a nave? In other words . . . does not your scrawl suggest a rude drawing of a cathedral to you? And the gargoyle fits in perfectly, for they are found only in cathedrals of olden times."

"But what if it does?"

"It means only that the solution of the mystery of Penelope Hammer's death, and all the rest, is bound up with a cathedral. Luys was trying to give us her message pictorially, since she could not write and we could not understand her words."

'But what has this got to do with me? There are hundreds of cathedrals in the world, there are a hundred in France here." I wanted to forget all the things of which they were reminding me.

"Then look at this clipping, *Fraulein* . . . the clipping that made Professor Orme and myself come all the way here from New York . . . the clipping that will make you decide to come with us and give us what help you can. . . ."

IT was a bit of paper torn from the front page of a New York newspaper, with a date line of a few weeks previous and the signature of the International Press.

"ANOTHER SPOOK IN AVIGNON RUINS," it began. "The caretaker and guide of the ruined cathedral of *Notre Dame des Domes* at Avignon, France, has just resigned his position, insisting in the face of popular skepticism that a new ghost has suddenly appeared in the ancient pile, the ghost of a tall woman in white who wears glasses! The cathedral has long been the locale of ghost-scares, and the tourists who come to see the near-by Palace of the Popes are shown the windows where the usual spectral lights, etc., are supposed to have shown themselves for centuries. But the supposed introduction of a modern ghost with eye-glasses is something out of the ordinary and will no doubt attract the attention of the psychic societies."

That was all.

A woman in white, wearing glasses. Could it be? I looked at Professor Orme, shivering a little. "Is it . . . do you think. . . ."

He nodded. "Doctor Nirsk and I are both certain that the new ghost which has appeared at Avignon is the unhappy spirit of the drowned Penelope Hammer! Now do you understand why all of us must go to Avignon and try to free the earth-bound spirit of that poor woman who died because of the mystery we stumbled upon?"

I nodded, slowly. It was unbelievable . . . but it seemed to be true. And the one noticeable thing about Penelope Hammer had been her thick eye-glasses . . . yes, it all fitted together like the parts of a toy puzzle. The gargoyle, the sketch which resembled the ground plan of a cathedral . . . it seemed clear enough.

"Will you go with us to Avignon . . .?" Doctor Nirsk leaned a little closer to me. "Your aunt and cousin have already expressed their willingness to go. It is a beautiful old town, this Avignon. It is in the heart of the Rhone valley, of the ancient land where we know that Languedor was spoken. You will not have to go into any trances, I promise. But the whole mystery centers in you. And how can any of us rest now . . . now that we know the dripping corpse of poor Penelope Hammer walks at night in those ruined walls? We cannot rest, any of us, until somehow the mystery is solved and the ghost is laid. Will you come?"

I looked at Aunt Harriet.

"PROFESSOR ORME and Doctor Nirsk are right," she said to me. "Beth, it's gone too far to stop now. I didn't understand before, but I have the greatest confidence in my old friend Orme here."

Still I was doubtful.

"But I want to forget it all," I cried. "I want to be free of Luys de Roche, of the whole business. And just as I was getting away, you come to me and tell me that I must go on. . . ."

"But are you getting away?" Doctor Nirsk stared intently at me. "Your aunt has told me about the perfume that frightened you because it resembled the scent of Luys de Roche. But do you not know that instead of *Attar de Vanille* . . . attar of vanilla, in English . . . being a new perfume as you thought, it was used commonly in the middle ages as a scent, among the wealthy? Can't you see that there is no freedom for you from this spell until we get to the bottom of it all?"

It was true. I couldn't deny it. The chain of mysterious events had not been broken. The perfume, the young man who resembled Raoul, yes, even my experience in the curiosity shop that evening . . . all showed that I was still leading a supernatural existence. I took the silver crucifix from my pocket and showed it to them all.

"Good God!" Orme seized it. "Where did you get such a priceless relic?"

I told him, and for a moment he was speechless. "Don't you know that this is absolutely unique . . . a crucifix more than six hundred years old? Notice the rounded top, the short arms . . . they mark its date as being at least the Fourteenth Century, when we think that Luys de Roche was alive, and when Languedor was spoken! This relic is closer to Luys de Roche and her time than anything we have reached yet. And it came to you in a fashion miraculous to say the least."

I nodded.

"I didn't want to take the thing, but the little old man insisted. He offered it to me at any price, then as a gift, and then he must have slipped it into my pocket. I hate it . . . I want to take it back."

Doctor Nirsk looked at Orme. Then he turned to me. "Can you lead us back to that shop?"

I thought that I could. "At once, then," he ordered. "I'll get a cab."

But that way wouldn't do. It was easier, I thought, to retrace my steps on foot. So we all set out, an excited little group. I led them in the general direction of the cul-de-sac, the blind alley, in which the shop had been. Daylight had gone, and everything seemed different. For hours, it seemed, I led them back and forth . . . but the exact place eluded me. Here, everywhere, the place seemed familiar. But the street was gone.

"In the morning, then," said Nirsk. "We must find what this fellow who gave it to you knows about the whole business."

Strangely, I slept well that night. It was to be our last in Paris, at least for a while. I agreed to accompany them to Avignon. There was nothing else to do.

We set out in the morning, again with me leading and the four others in the rear. Things were themselves by daylight, and without much difficulty I led the way through the meandering streets, on and on . . . suddenly I cried aloud and pointed. There was the opening of the side-street at the end of which I had found my little shop with green shutters. "Eureka!" cried Doctor Nirsk. "We are on the trail."

ALMOST running, I rounded the corner . . . and stopped short. There was the familiar street . . . there were the two big stone mansions I remembered so clearly . . . but the shop which had stood between them did not exist! Their walls were touching!

I stood there, blankly. "It must have been some other street," I said slowly. But no . . . for the two stone houses were unmistakable. And besides, I recognized the little street. There was the iron railing, the broken pavement . . . everything just as it had been on the previous evening. But the shop, the shop with green shutters did not exist.

I tried to explain to the others. I pointed out to them where it had been, all the time wondering if I had gone mad. No . . . for there was the silver crucifix, heavy and beautiful as it had always been. I had meant to hand it back to the odd little man . . . was he, too, a dream?

"But it wasn't another street," I insisted wildly. "I know it was here. The sign with the word *Curiosities* swung right there, beneath the branches of the elm that hang across the street. *Curiosities*, M. Le Mort, it read. . . ."

Nirsk seized my arm. "Le Mort? Monsieur Le Mort, did you say?"

I nodded, blankly.

"Don't you know what that means? Of course not, you haven't studied French. Monsieur Le Mort . . . Monsieur the Death!" His voice lowered to a whisper.

My body turned cold. "Monsieur the . . . Death. . . ." Impossible. A coincidence. A nightmare. But the weight of the silver crucifix in my pocket told me that it was real. Where, where in God's name had I been on the preceding evening? What hand had offered me the gift of silver?

I began to laugh, hysterically. Doctor Nirsk at once took my hand, and his eyes reasserted their power over me.

"No matter what has happened, no matter what will happen, be brave, *Fraulein*. Be calm. Spirits are not necessarily our enemies . . . and I believe that you particularly are their friend. Besides, a crucifix is a holy symbol, blessed by the faith of countless people. It has never been a symbol of harm, a sign of Darkness. Think of the happiness it has brought to the dying, the sick . . . think of its meaning of love and sacrifice. And cast aside fear!"

I nodded, slowly. My fingers closed around the mysterious bit of silver. I was too tired to be afraid any longer. Too many frightening things had happened. I only knew that there was now no turning back. We had, as Nirsk said, gone too far on the strange pathway. We must follow it to its end . . . even if it led us to the bitter death that had come to poor Penelope Hammer!

THAT noon we left Paris for Avignon . . . Avignon, once the Seat of the Popes, the "little Rome," the capital of civilization and the wickedest city of the known world. Such were the things I had learned of Avignon in my history classes in school. But how little they told of the real Avignon of to-day. . . . How little I was forewarned!

The trip passed pleasantly enough . . . most of the time I spent resting, or talking with Professor Orme. Nirsk was busy making notes on the events of the preceding day, though I would often sense that he was staring at me, and look up to glimpse the dark glittering eyes focused on my face. The eyes, they spoke volumes . . . words that his lips had promised not to utter. . . .

IT all seemed unreal. We were going to a strange city, a forgotten, out-of-the-way corner of France, on as prosaic a thing as a French *wagon-lit* . . . traveling in search of a ghost six hundred years dead . . . and a ghost two months dead! If it was true, as Nirsk and Orme believed so firmly, that Penelope Hammer was in reality the specter in white seen in the cathedral. I tried not to think of it, tried to keep my mind on other things, but I would always come back to that. What a wild-goose chase, the world would have said! Yet here was an impossibility stronger than truth itself!

Avignon at last! We arrived after midnight, and all that I remember of the trip to the hotel Orme had chosen was a glimpse of a ruined city wall and an ancient gate through which the cab passed. Then a long ride over cobbled streets, and a hotel that smelled mouldy. In spite of everything, I was so worn and tired that I slept like a log. It was comforting to wake and find Joan beside me and Aunt Harriet across the room.

It was after midday, in spite of everything, when at last Aunt Harriet and I stood before the great door of the cathedral of *Notre Dame des Domes* and waited for the others. Doctor Nirsk and Orme had been investigating legends and histories of the place, and Joan, strangely enough, had wandered off in an exploration of the town all by herself. Aunt Harriet had remained with me, for she understood how I felt. Unwillingly, I was the center of all this. Unwillingly, I was the star of this little drama of two worlds. I, I was the gateway, the medium. . . .

I was surprised, as we waited, to see that the cathedral was still standing. It was not a ruin, except for the fact that most of the beautiful windows had fallen in. High-walled, arched and Gothic, with a great leaden statue of the Virgin on the highest tip, the ancient cathedral stood serenely in

the sun, much as it must have stood centuries ago when Luys de Roche walked this avenue. . . .

Then a voice hailed us, and Joan hastened up. She had explored the town from the Rhone at the north to the city gate at the south, from the *Boulevard de l'Oulle* to the ruins of St. Sympharien cloister. For a moment I listened to her light-hearted comments on the sleepy town and its shops and markets. Then Nirsk and Orme appeared.

THEY, too, were surprised to see the cathedral in such good condition. Here was a building which had been crumbling when Luys de Roche walked this earth . . . six hundred years before! Yet it still stood, a symbol of permanency. . . .

All of us were impatient to get inside. No guide, no verger seemed in sight. At last we ventured to push aside the outer doors, and enter.

On we went, through the deserted nave. The vast arches of the transept shone dimly above us, and we drew a little closer as if for protection. There was something not of this world in the quiet of the place, in its tremendous aloofness.

Now and again Professor Orme stopped to enthuse over some fragment of carving, or to translate some device or inscription in the ancient Latin. But we kept on, Nirsk still hoping that here the influences would be most powerful . . . that here the Other World would make its message directly known through me. If only this was, as he thought, the center, the stage of the whole thing!

For hours we wandered in the ruins, through choir, transept, sacristy and chapel . . . climbing over heaps of rubbish and stone. Here were a thousand odd corners, a thousand by-ways and hidden places. And then Doctor Nirsk discovered the open stairway.

It led down a few steps in the direction of what must have been the basement of the apse, the great semi-circular part of the cathedral that faced the east and the rising sun. For that reason it was in deepest shadow now.

"Shall we go down?" he asked. "Who knows what we may find?" Indeed, who did know?

He led the way onward, using a pocket torch when it was necessary. Everything was wrapped in a twilight haze, a thick semi-darkness . . . a sort of unearthly twilight. . . .

The others were ahead of me, pressing onward down the stairs and along the corridors. It was then that I found the great oak-studded door. There was a handle of tarnished brass. "Oh, look what I've found, everybody!" I called out. "This looks like another passageway . . . perhaps a stair that will lead up to the apse again. . . ." Without a fear, without a thought to warn me of disaster, I turned the handle. Slowly, creakily, the massive door began to swing outward.

"Fraulein, be careful!" came Nirsk's sharp voice. "Don't open that . . . it's the door of the burial vaults, of the ancient crypt . . . wait, for God's sake. . . ."

I TRIED to drop the handle, tried to let the door close. I wanted to run, wanted to dash toward the others and bury my head on Aunt Harriet's shoulder. They had stopped, and Nirsk was starting back toward me. But I could not close the door. Some pressure, firm and irresistible, was against me . . . forcing the door outward. Some influence stronger than my will, stronger than my body, was in power. Slowly, terribly, the crypt door swung open . . . my eyes widened, and silent screams tore my throat. . . .

For there in that doorway, silhouetted clearly in white against a black background of the deepest shadow, was the familiar face of Penelope Hammer!

One glimpse I had of that face . . . yes, worst of all . . . one glimpse of those familiar eye-glasses that I remember so well. One glimpse I had of a Thing that I knew did not exist and could not exist. . . .

A leprous white hand reached toward me, clutchingly . . . and I felt myself drawn inward . . . into the shadow of the crypt . . . with the *thing!*

What horrid fate lurks for Beth in the dark shadows of the ruined cathedral? Lured by the ghostly hands of the suicide, Penelope Hammer, and by the weird dreams of her hypnotic trances, haunted by the strange sweetness of her new romance with the mysterious, unknown gallant of the Paris park, she goes to face the grim shadows of the crumbling cathedral, where waits, she is convinced, the yawning throat of the Gargoyle of her dreams.

Read the next instalment of this unusual tale in the November issue of GHOST STORIES. *On sale at all news stands October 23rd!*

WITCH ORCHARD

By HERBERT HALL TAYLOR

For perhaps five, possibly six minutes, we three gazed silently into the water. Then I distinctly beheld the figure of an Indian

Do spirits of long ago haunt this old New England well?

IF a hundred men were to be asked if they were superstitious there would be a wonderful degree of unanimity in the denial and yet there is a trace of it existent in all of us. The man who laughs at his neighbor who will not walk under a ladder, will refuse to dine with thirteen at table, and the scoffer who refuses to regard the breaking of a mirror with apprehension carries a horse-chestnut in his pocket as a preventive of rheumatism. Even Lincoln had great faith in the virtues of the "mad-stone" as a cure for hydrophobia and Senator Ingalls admitted a belief in ghosts.

Indeed, when one enters the field of the occult there are very few who do not secretly believe in the churchyard apparition and the haunted house specter. It is incredible, perhaps, but a belief in witchcraft persists in many of the old New England towns among educated and otherwise well-informed persons. It is only two or three years since suit was actually brought against a woman for damages for the loss of a dog alleged to have been killed by witchcraft and judgment was obtained from a local justice of the peace. And to-day there are "witch-doctors" who purport to be able to counteract diseases caused by witches.

At the gateway to Cape Cod in the town of Middleboro is a desolate tract of land known as "the witch orchard" and its precise location is as well-known to the native as the parish pump. Not alone that, but the legendary tales associated with the weird spot are familiar to every schoolboy in the village.

These tales which derive their force and authority from *viva voce* recitals from generation to generation from "time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary" have come to be generally accepted as true. Should one be so tactless as to register incredulity, he is assailed with data seemingly incontrovertible.

THE creepy stories, too, are not all traditional. In the cranberry bogs old settlers tell of sights they have visualized and experiences they have undergone and whatever the explanation may be one cannot doubt the sincerity of the raconteur.

Before proceeding to tell the story of the events which have recently attracted the investigator of psychic phenomena to the orchard, it may be interesting to review its history.

Elmer Shaw, born within a stone's throw of the spot in 1860; Charlie Benson, who has lived for more than fifty years in close proximity, and the Shurtleff family, whose

ancestors were nearest neighbors of the "witch" recall vividly many traditions. (Mr. Shaw's property joins that of the witch orchard, the present owner of which is David Jones.)

The home of the reputed witch was on the old Indian trail to Plymouth where Miles Standish achieved his first victory over the Red Men. It would be located today between Tispaquin and Short streets where only a crumbling cellar wall marks the spot and two or three scraggly fruit trees remain to identify the orchard. Pictures of the dwelling, however, are still extant in historical records of the town and the "witch's well" may be readily found about four feet from the wood road (passable by auto).

IRRESPECTIVE of its sinister history it is a weird, gloomy, spooky spot and seen in the twilight it appears to be an appropriate environment for the uncanny happenings said to occur there. It is an entirely isolated locality, no dwelling or other evidence of occupation being within a long distance, and timid persons give the place a wide berth, while even the most venturesome shun it after dark.

Mr. Shaw recalls that as a boy he dreaded to pass the locality and although occasionally he mustered up enough courage to gather fruit from a tempting plum tree, he was set for instant flight no matter in what guise the witch should appear to him.

"You know they said you never could tell what shape she'd take," explained Mr. Shaw in apparent apology for his timidity.

The orthodox conception of witchcraft is depicted in all the legends of the Cape Cod town. The witch, unkempt hair falling over her shoulders, long fangs protruding from otherwise toothless gums, is beheld astride the conventional broomstick, or with bent, distorted form dependent upon a crooked stick.

As a result of a compact with the devil, she is endowed with the power to dry up the wells of enemies, breed distemper in cattle and force cows to yield bloody milk. With evil incantations she put magic spells on people; smoked curses on them and caused sickness in whole families. In a massive iron cauldron she brewed concoctions which enabled her to predict coming events—usually disastrous.

To the Middleboro witch is ascribed all these abnormal powers and then some. One old-timer, who bears an excellent reputation for veracity, remembers that he had often heard his grandfather tell of the witch taking his horses from their stalls and riding them through the night. As a result, when he found them in the morning they were covered with sweat.

Another venerable citizen recalls that a committee is said to have tested the woman to ascertain if she were really a witch. The test was to put her into a sack with heavy stones and drop her into the Nemasket river. If she sank, she was all right, but if she floated, she was a witch. She *floated.*

Charlie Benson remembers that old people used to say that the witch frequently assumed the shape of a pig and could be seen and heard grunting around the roots of the trees in the orchard. At other times she would exhibit herself as a bear.

Mr. Shurtleff states that the story runs that the witch had a husband and that when she was a bear she was bearish and played a little rough with him. One day, when she was a bear, she mauled him considerably and he vowed that the next time she tackled him in that shape he would be ready for her. Accordingly, he melted up his silver sleeve-buttons, ran them into a mold and loaded up the old flint-lock. When she started a bear dance he shot her. She at once resumed her human form but a bullet-hole showed that the old gentleman was a good marksman.

While all these traditions are absurd, nevertheless they have survived and in view of what follows are not wholly irrelevant. In fact, stories of present day occurrences told by eye witnesses are as improbable to most persons as those of the Colonial period. So far as the actual facts are concerned they are worthy of credence. It is the explanation of these facts which is a mystery.

THE legends are, of course, of no value except as indicative of a fact that there is a place known as the witch orchard and that no one recalls when it was known by any other appellation, and that the woman who occupied it was believed to be a witch. The distinction between the old and the new stories is that the latter recite the experiences of persons now living whose testimony may be weighed and examined. They do not pertain to witchcraft but to phenomena observed at the witch's well, and they are quite as sensational from an occult point of view. Not only that, but

a verification may be possible from one's own experiments.

Persons who have witnessed uncanny scenes at the well are much averse to publicity, doubtless from fear of being ridiculed, but they will be found in every instance to be credible and trustworthy; persons whose word in the little community is accepted without question.

A man named Sarles, who lives with his son-in-law on a farm about four miles from the center of the village, is believed to be the first person to investigate personally the story that visions of persons long dead had been plainly discerned in the witch's well. Mr. Sarles is neither illiterate nor ignorant and appears to be as little prone to superstition as the average man.

"The peculiarity of the well," said Mr. Sarles, "was discovered on a bright, sunny day, when it was decided to clean it out and a mirror was employed in order to render the bottom of the well visible."

Stories of what had been seen there reached Mr. Sarles and although quite skeptical, he determined to look into the matter. Equipped with a mirror about a foot square, he started one morning alone for the spot, for fear, as he says, of being laughed at by practical neighbors.

"Some of the things I saw there," said Mr. Sarles, shaking his forefinger impressively, "I have never told to any human being and I never shall, but many of them have been seen by others as well as myself. For instance, the white coffin, the skulls and the huge, black, shapeless mass with a head of frightful appearance have been observed, you will find, by numbers of persons. Speaking for myself I can say positively that I have identified faces of deceased relatives. They were, it is true, somewhat distorted but easily recognizable just the same and no phantasm of the imaginations."

GEORGE C. BLACKMAR, a librarian, is a man of the highest standing. He is educated, clear-eyed and intensely practical. When interviewed, he was inclined to be reticent, but admitted frankly that he had "seen things in the well," which were inexplicable to him.

"I am satisfied though," declared Mr. Blackmar, "that these objects are not visualized by everyone, nor are they always to be seen. On a cloudy day for instance, nothing is visible and even when there is a bright sunlight I have sometimes failed to observe any phenomena. Whenever I have seen things, however, the sun has always been shining. Another peculiar fact is that it has happened that I have seen visions when friends with me insisted they could see nothing despite my efforts to point them out.

"I saw only one face that I thought I could recognize," continued Mr. Blackmar, thoughtfully, in response to a query, "but I did see objects which have been described by others—a beautiful white casket and the lady's hand with the wedding-ring.

"THE faces appear on the surface of the water, apparently arising from the bottom of the well and the hand that I saw steal across the patch of shadow thrown by the mirror, was certainly no figment of the imagination."

My curiosity excited by these tales and those of others who refused to talk unless assured that their names would not be mentioned, I decided to personally investigate the alleged phenomena. A member of the Society for Psychical Research had told me of similar phenomena which the Society had investigated many years ago, which had been observed in an old Virginia well and I was in consequence prepared to test the "visions" to some extent.

In the Virginia well it was decided there was nothing of an occult nature. The explanation made was that the phantasms were to a great extent imaginary and also that reflections of surrounding objects, largely distorted by the mirror, contributed to the illusions.

I experienced no difficulty in locating the "witch orchard." The first man with whom I talked at the Middleboro post-office directed me to the spot. I drove out Tispaquin street, turning abruptly left on Short street and then onto a wood road on which I traveled for approximately half a mile. I readily found the cellar wall of the witch's house and the well, which is about three feet in circumference. Its walls are of ordinary field stone, partially moss-covered and the top is only a little above the level of the ground. There was neither winch nor pump and although the well is said to have been operated by an old-fashioned sweep there is no trace of it remaining.

It was a bright, sunny day which made the fantastic tales I had heard seem doubly improbable and I was rather inclined to laugh at the prospect of witnessing anything unusual and somewhat ashamed of the fact

that I had provided a mirror to aid in the investigation. Then, too, I was accompanied by a gentleman who had sneered openly at the recitals to which we had both listened. He is a man of the highest integrity, a world-war veteran and a confirmed skeptic concerning supernatural experiences. His attitude was that of quiet amusement as kneeling by the side of the well, I held the mirror in a position to enable me to see the bottom.

THE depth is about twenty feet and by shifting my position and holding the glass at different angles every part of the bottom was plainly discernible. Mindful of the explanation of the Virginia visions I glanced about for anything which might be reflected on the surface of the water. There is an open space extending for some distance around the well and although it is heavily timbered on the opposite side of the road, there is nothing which can cast a shadow in the well.

The water seemed clear as crystal and even without the assistance of the mirror I could see down for several feet. I altered the position of the glass repeatedly but nothing was reflected. Neither on the surface nor at the bottom was there anything to distinguish the place from any other abandoned well. I felt distinctly foolish at wasting my time, affected by childish tales. I was about to arise when glancing at my companion I saw him raise a warning finger.

Suddenly he gave a startled exclamation and clutched my arm. He was gazing steadily into the depths of the well. Following his lead, I, too, peered into the water, having discarded the mirror, but saw nothing. An instant later it dawned upon me that the surface of the water no longer seemed clear; it had a hazy, clouded appearance as though covered by a thin, white film.

I have referred to the fact that my companion was free from all superstition. He is also extremely practical and most certainly worthy of credence. He was a major in the United States army and is today holding an important government position. As I looked at him inquiringly, he asked in a low voice with a perceptible manifestation of agitation if I had seen anything. I shook my head, then added: "Nothing except that the water seems cloudy now."

"You see nothing else?"

Again I replied in the negative.

When the major spoke again the tremor in his voice was startling. "I saw something. Something which I shall never forget. It was the form and face of a buddy of mine who made the supreme sacrifice in France. He was in full officer's uniform and there is not the slightest doubt of his identity. The vision has really overcome me."

This from the "hard-boiled" major was so startling that I looked at him incredulously to see if he was joking. There was no smile on his face, however. He was evidently badly shaken. He said that the illusion, vision, or whatever one may choose to term it had persisted for several seconds and had finally faded. He declined to remain longer with such an assumption of finality that we at once arose and departed. Personally, I had seen nothing except as I have stated the filmy appearance of the water for which I had no explanation.

The following day it rained so that I was unable to continue my research and the next day it was too cloudy. The sun came out brightly, however, on the third day and once more I was at the well, this time accompanied by two men whom I had selected for their high degree of intelligence. Again we searched diligently for any objects which might cast shadows which a vivid imagination might transform into objects and faces heretofore described, but in vain. The explanation of the Virginia phenomena was assuredly not tenable here.

"Now that we have conclusively demonstrated that there can be no natural explanation of what your friend, the major, saw, let's see if we can see anything," suggested one of the men. "If any of us sees anything let him remain silent and we'll compare notes afterward."

And now occurred the only inexplicable phenomenon for which I can personally vouch.

FOR perhaps five, possibly six minutes, we three had gazed silently into the water. Then I distinctly beheld the figure of an Indian, a warrior in paint and feathers, the colors of which were quite distinguishable. It apparently came from the bottom of the well to the surface of the water.

The two gentlemen with me agreed with the description of the Indian which I had given and each of us wrote his account separately, unknown to the other prior to

comparison. They had seen the apparition exactly as it had appeared to me. Each, however, added a detail which I had not observed. On the side of the cheek was a gash about two inches long. From where I was kneeling, that side of the face—the left—could not be seen so distinctly as from the spot my friends were occupying.

We all agreed that the vision had been seen for from eight to ten seconds. I had written ten seconds and my companions eight.

We spent perhaps another hour at the well but it was barren of result. Nothing further appeared.

It is possible that telepathy may explain why the vision of the Indian was apparent to three persons but after all the question to be answered is why it should be seen by anyone.

To revert to the statement of Mr. Sarles, who declared that he had seen things in the well which he would never disclose. It appears that many years ago there was an unsolved murder in Middleboro. A close friend of Mr. Sarles has said that he may have seen enacted in the well, the old tragedy and owing to the prominence of the murderer has not dared to reveal what he saw. This is, of course, mere conjecture, but in talking with Mr. Sarles later I became convinced that it is a plausible explanation.

While the witch stories are incredible and doubtless also, the tales of faces in the well, the fact remains that many very reputable people claim to have seen them.

Crime Discovered Through a Dream

MARIA MARTIN was the daughter of a Suffolk mole-catcher, who resided at Polstead. She had a very pretty face and a beautiful figure but was simple and artless. She fell prey to the advances of William Corder, a wealthy farmer's son. He promised the father of Maria that he would marry his daughter privately but she must go with him to Ipswich, dressed in male attire, which she could exchange on the way for her own clothes in one of his barns, known as the Red Barn. After her departure she was never seen again alive. Her mother questioned Corder, who said she was alive and well, in hiding to prevent his friends discovering the marriage that day.

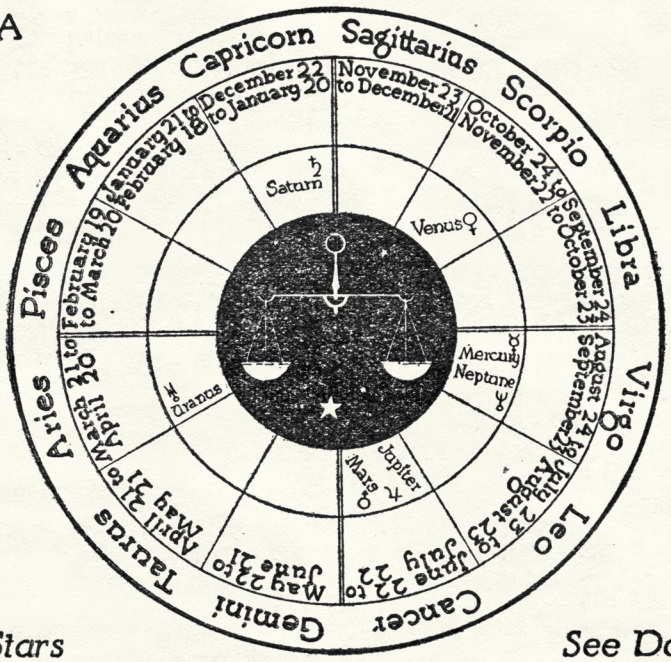
Soon after, he went to a distant part of the world, to benefit his health, as he said, expressing curious anxiety before he started to see the Red Barn well filled with grain. He wrote to his widowed mother, dating from the Isle of Wight, but the letters always bore the London postmark. He said that Maria was with him.

The Martins were, however, very anxious about their daughter, the mother having dreamed on three successive nights that Maria had been murdered and buried in the Red Barn. It was remembered that on the morning when she met her lover at her father's cottage, and they went out by different doors to meet again at some appointed spot, Corder carried a gun.

On the 19th of April in the following year Mrs. Martin persuaded her husband and son to apply for permission to search the Red Barn, on the pretext that Maria had left the clothes in which she went from home there. The grain had by that time been removed. Mrs. Corder did not object, and the search began, Mrs. Martin pointing out the spot she had seen in her dream, and where in that dream she had seen the body of her murdered child buried. Although no marks of violence were at first visible, the body of the missing woman was discovered, buried under the flooring in a sack. Corder was found and later confessed to the murder. He had shot her through the right eye.

Were You Born *in* October?

By STELLA KING



Let the Stars Indicate Your Fate

See Daily Guide for October, Page 104

THE Sun enters the sign of Libra on September 24th and, progressing at the rate of one degree a day, reaches the border of Scorpio on the 24th of October. If you have a birthday during this period, you possess certain characteristics which are associated with Libra, the sign of balance. You love beauty and harmony and are gentle, artistic, affectionate, neat and refined. In manner you should be sweet and courteous, for your type hates anything that is unpleasant, ugly or abnormal. Even sickness in others repels you, however sympathetic you may try to be. Sickness is an expression of discord and your whole being craves harmony. You compare and balance one thing with another, striving always for justice and harmony. You are not dogmatic or aggressive; indeed, many of you are too tolerant and too easy-going. The majority of those born under your sign are absolutely honest, honorable and high-principled.

As is the case with all other types, there are Librans who are not yet sufficiently developed to use their qualities constructively. Instead of being tactful, adaptable and harmonious, they are careless and unmoral and, instead of living up to their ideals, they drift along the line of least resistance. Insincere and vain, they themselves are easily pleased and will do anything to please for the moment or to save themselves trouble. The man, who, having perhaps taken a drink, forgets all about his family responsibilities and drifts carelessly along what appears to be the pleasantest path for himself, is an example; or the woman who lives in the present and takes whatever comes easiest, not necessarily meaning to drift, but incapable of saying "no." Often, in such cases, the innate refinement and appreciation of beauty given by Libra, proves a stumbling-block rather than a blessing.

Children born under the influence of Libra should be taught that the end does not justify the means and that life is a serious undertaking with a definite purpose.

The desire for praise and approbation—which is inborn in the Libran character—should not be suppressed, but the praise should be given only when due and for worthwhile effort. Libra and Aquarius are said to give the greatest beauty, with Sagittarius, when rising, perhaps a close third. Libra gives the greatest perfection of form combined with attractive ways and sweetness of disposition and it is quite natural to spoil such a child. If parents would remember that the desire for praise and flattery underlies most of the faults of character in this type, I think they would be careful to insist upon a proper amount of discipline for their children in preparation for the battle of life.

ALL Librans are under the guidance of the lovely Venus or Aphrodite, which is her Greek name. You remember the story of Aphrodite—how she rose, in all her beauty, from the foam of the sea. An astrological truth underlies this story, for Libra is an air sign and the ocean symbolizes the astral or emotional plane of being. As foam is air imprisoned in water, the connection between Libra and the goddess Venus is clearly indicated; and the ever-changing beauty of the foam becomes the symbol of the feminine principle in nature, Libra being the most feminine of the twelve signs.

Libra is not a specialist. In nature, it is the masculine element that is forceful and best fitted for work requiring great concentration and intensity. As a child of Libra, you are more adapted for work which demands versatility. You are able to do a great many things well and are especially clever in coordinating different factors and thus creating a perfect whole. The average woman—particularly while her children are young—must be able to leave one thing to attend to another and suffer constant interruptions without losing her temper, whereas, in more specialized work, such interruptions would be both trying to the temper and detrimental to the work. We are not all meant to be active and forceful like the planet Mars; there is great need in the world for the qualities given by Libra—patience, contentment, adaptability, and willingness to do the little things well without considering them a waste of time.

Much of the Orient comes traditionally under the rule of Libra—Japan, the northern provinces of China, Upper Egypt, Thibet, and Burma—and we are all familiar with the beautiful and finished workmanship of the natives of these countries. Who, but an Oriental would decorate with such exquisite care the inside of a box as well as the outside? The average Libran will make many a sacrifice for the sake of beauty and is, temperamentally, fond of luxury.

Any occupation requiring tact and diplomacy or associated with beauty, justice, decoration or pleasure is suitable for your type. You would succeed as an interior decorator, stage director, librarian, or beauty-culturist; or in any business connected with art, flowers, theatre, pictures, music, pleasure-trips, or tobacco. Many Librans are also attracted to the sea.

Unless under a very powerful influence from a more self-sufficient sign, the Libran should not live alone as companionship is essential to happiness. In marriage—despite your love of luxury—you crave the lover rather than the partner-provider and as Aries and Libra complement each other, the happiest marriages are those in which an Aries man marries a Libra woman. Mars and Venus are the heavenly lovers and, as you know, Mars rules Aries and Venus Libra. This does not mean that all Aries people are attracted to Librans or that you will not find happiness with a marriage partner born under any other sign. Libra, Aquarius and Gemini are all air signs and each has much in common with the other. You may find your true partner among the Aquarians or among the Geminians, or you may carry someone of your own type, though, in that case, there is the danger that you might be too much alike to enjoy lasting happiness together.

THE colors that belong to Libra are the pale blues and yellows, dove grey, pearl, and any of the pastel and art shades that you may prefer. Diamonds, pearls and opals are your lucky stones. Your flowers are the rose, lillies and violets. Your best characteristic is probably your ability to adapt yourself and find contentment in any circumstances, and your worse faults arise from a desire for praise and readiness to listen to flattery.

Dimples are said to be the mark of Venus, your "star of destiny," and those who have dimples will be found to have been born when Venus was on the Eastern horizon or in a position of prominence.

There are two eclipses during October—

an eclipse of the moon about 2. P.M. (New York time) on the seventh, and one of the sun about eight minutes to five on the afternoon of the twenty-first. The lunar eclipse will be felt chiefly by those who have planets in the fifteenth degree of Aries or were born about the fifth of January or June, the fourth of April or the seventh of October. As the Moon at the time of eclipse will be in close conjunction with the planet Uranus, events of an unexpected nature are likely to arise from unsuspected quarters and all those who come under this influence should avoid risks, live as quietly as possible and postpone changes unless such changes are absolutely necessary. They should exercise particular care about the end of the year or they may suffer considerable loss.

The solar eclipse takes place in the twenty-eighth degree of Libra and affects those born about the 18th of January or April and the 21st of July or October. Many of those who come under this influence will make important changes but they should guard with great care both their health and their money. Periods when the greatest care should be taken are about the time of the eclipse, during the second part of December, and in February 1931, when the full effect of this eclipse is likely to be felt. Uranus being again the planet chiefly concerned, troubles are likely to arise swiftly and without warning and all possible risks should be eliminated.

This eclipse falls directly across the place to which Saturn has progressed in the horoscope of India so that there is little chance of any settlement in that country for some time and the latter part of November is particularly adverse. The effect of bolshevistic teaching throughout the Orient is likely to become more and more apparent.

HERMES, the great Egyptian teacher, said: "There shall be much inconvenience and trouble happen in the world when both luminaries—sun and moon—shall be eclipsed in one month, and chiefly in those places in which the eclipses are visible." Twice this year the sun and moon have been eclipsed during the same month. It happened in April and there were a great many disasters, and it happens again in October.

The effect of a solar eclipse lasts for as many years as the hours of darkness during the eclipse; for instance, the solar eclipse in May, 1928, lasted four hours and affected financial affairs in particular and this effect will continue until 1932. A lunar eclipse affects conditions for the same number of months as there are hours of darkness.

The eclipses in November, 1929, and April 1930 brought into effect that which was indicated by the May 1928 eclipse, and the transit of Mars over the place of the November and April eclipses about the middle of June explains the break in prices on the New York stock exchange at that time. As indications are by no means favorable during the last three months of this year, I trust that those who cannot afford to lose, will eliminate all possible risks and be content to wait until the stars are with, rather than against them. On November 8th, Mars reaches the square of the eclipses in question and values should be closely watched throughout the first week of that month as the effects of a ray from Mars are frequently felt before the actual date on which the planets contact each other.

MANY of the outstanding astrological predictions—such as Lilly's prediction of the great fire of London—were made from eclipses and their relationship to the meeting place of slow-moving planets. An eclipse in itself is not necessarily a portent of evil, though the light of one luminary is cut off from the earth during the eclipse. The planetary positions at the time of eclipse indicate the probable effect, which s felt principally in those countries in which the eclipse is visible.

Eclipses in Taurus, such as those of November 1929 and April 1930, are said to portend a scarcity of crops and to affect the fruits of the earth; those which take place in Libra, as during the present month, were considered by the ancient astrologers to portend tempest, scarcity and pestilence, with strife and division amongst religious bodies. Unfortunately, this seems only too likely throughout the East, and particularly in India. The differences in the anglican church are also far from settled.

Jupiter has passed the opposition of Saturn and is getting away from the adverse Uranian rays but is not yet free from unexpected adversities which continue to hamper business in general. However, this planet is powerful enough to send rays of optimism and good-fellowship to those born during the second week of July, March or November. Even if they should be surrounded with troubles, they will find a help-

ing hand, for Jupiter will not desert them. These vibrations should be used to improve conditions. In case of sickness, remedial measures should be taken while these good influences are at work. Mars is also sending rays of energy to these same individuals urging them to make good use of their opportunities and bringing them into contact with stimulating and active forces.

JUPITER is the largest of the planets and the most friendly to man. He is found to occupy a position of prominence in the horoscopes of all those who attract good and are considered lucky. This planet returns to the same place in the heavens every twelve years and the year during which he passes through the sign under which you were born, is always a fortunate year in some respect. How great this fortune will be depends upon other factors in your horoscope, as the passage of a single planet is naturally not a strong enough influence to counteract an adverse horoscope. It will mitigate the evil and bring help.

We speak of the planets causing certain effects but this is really not quite correct. It is perhaps the simplest way. In reality, the vibrations of the planets are carried on the more powerful waves of the fixed stars, just as a radio broadcast is transmitted on a carrier wave to a receiving station. You are the station, or we might say, the radio and you receive the rays to which you are attuned.

Your vibrations mingle with the planetary rays, producing changed vibrations which attract or repel certain conditions. If the new vibration is harmonious you enjoy good fortune; if not, you are placed under considerable tension which results in confusion, violence and ill-health. You may not be able altogether to control these vibrations but if you know what to expect, you can usually keep your temper and act with greater discretion than you might otherwise, and in an emergency you are more likely to keep your head. Or, if you know that your health is not good, take steps to protect or improve it.

If you were born about the ninth of January or April, or the twelfth of October, you should be very careful not to go to excess in anything; don't be too optimistic or too much of a good fellow or you may find yourself in financial difficulties.

For the next six months, Neptune will interest himself in those born during the last few days of August, the 25th of February, the 27th of May, or the 28th of November. If your birthday comes within a few days of any of these dates, avoid conditions that may lead to misunderstanding, be careful not to become involved in other people's affairs, and choose your friends and associates with a little more care than usual. Neptune frequently brings about a crisis which may have been threatening for some time; the exposure of some secret is a favorite method of attack, or a financial crisis may result from misrepresentation or speculation, or, again, the health may suffer, probably through nervous debility or the glandular system may be disorganized.

Those born about the 26th of April or June, or the 28th of November, may gain through travel, drama, oil, or the talkies since Neptune is sending them a message of goodwill and offers them an unusual opportunity, the realization of some great wish, or pleasures which will be long remembered.

What the Stars Foretell for Every Day in October

Below are given the planetary indications for October. Let them guide you to success.

1. *Ask favors, look for employment and promotion, advertise.*

2. *Make changes, begin new work and new undertakings. A good day for business, invention and travel.*

3. *Continue work already begun and attend to ordinary duties. Adverse for finance.*

4. *Morning adverse. Favorable for buying to sell again.*

5. *A good day for religious matters. Spend part of the day in open air exercise.*

6. *Business conditions and values uncertain. Be prepared for sudden changes. Avoid risk.*

7. *Lunar eclipse and occultation of Uranus. Unexpected developments pending. Avoid all risk and postpone important decisions for 48 hours.*

8. *Vibrations still adverse. Evening favorable for romance and psychic investigation or study.*

9. *Buy to hold. Look for bargains in household necessities and attend to matters connected with real estate and elderly people. Favorable for cooking, agriculture and gardening. Make permanent removals.*

10. *Attend to matters which require good judgment and decision. A favorable day for finance, general business and salesmanship.*

11. *Write, study and travel. Avoid gossip and misunderstanding, especially with relatives.*

12. *A day of general happiness if you practise moderation.*

13. *Adverse for business and financial values. Act with prudence.*

14. *Stick to routine business and keep out of danger. Take no financial risk; conditions uncertain and subject to change.*

15. *Another adverse day when no risk should be taken. See friends and seek entertainment in evening.*

16. *Favorable for correspondence, travel and permanent changes. Begin new work in morning. Advertise.*

17. *Ask favors in early morning. Be careful what you eat and drink. Look for bargains after noon.*

18. *Buy to sell again early in morning. Do work requiring conservative judgment and concentration. Ask favors and discuss important matters in evening.*

19. *Be cautious in morning. Day favorable for friendship, love, music, art and pleasure. Rest and relax.*

20. *Adverse. Be careful and keep your mind on what you are doing. Avoid risks. Do routine work.*

21. *Solar eclipse. Postpone important matters for at least 48 hours. Be prepared for the unexpected.*

22. *Conditions improve. Favorable for detective work and for finding out secrets. Improvement in business.*

23. *Good for business. Be careful not to make mistakes and do not sign without reading what is written.*

24. *Guard against misrepresentation and be cautious in speculation or games of chance. Attend to matters which require energy and mechanical ability. Afternoon favorable for music, romance, love and social activities.*

25. *Buy or wear new clothes. See friends and mix with young people. Travel and seek relaxation and entertainment.*

26. *Very favorable for spiritual matters. Settle family problems.*

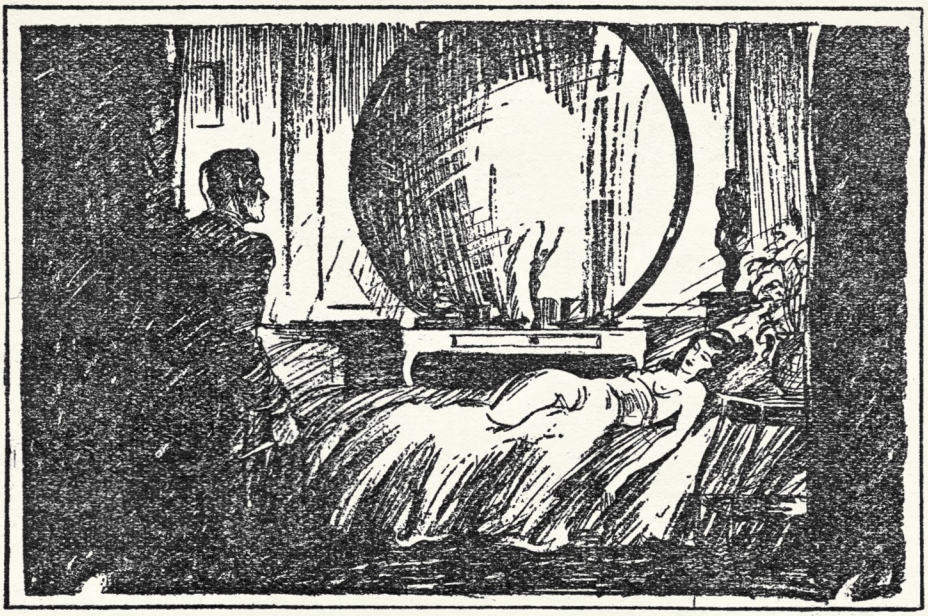
27. *An adverse day. Be very careful not to run risks or let your attention wander. Spend the day as quietly as possible and in ordinary duties.*

28. *Vibrations still adverse.*

29. *Conditions improve. Good for money interests, romance, travel, and love. Make changes after noon. Attend to inventions and new undertakings. Can fruit or vegetables.*

30. *Favorable for buying if opportunity arises.*

31. *Buy in morning to sell again and look for bargains in necessities.*



She lay outstretched, still as death

Park Avenue Vampire

The Gypsy's warning prophecy of long ago comes true at last

By RAMON DAWSON

UNABLE to resist the glamorous beauty and intriguing personality of Paula Delrio, Ramon is trapped by her. He realizes that other young men of his set who have loved this charming creature have been afflicted by a strange and fatal malady which no one could diagnose. While visiting Miss Delrio, who sees no one until after midnight, his fiancee telephones. Ramon returns to his senses long enough to hear her voice—saying she will marry him the next day if he wishes. During the conversation a voice comes over the wire—one he has not heard for some time—Larry's—the voice of his room-mate who had loved Paula and has recently died though the cause of his death was never determined. Larry was trying to warn him. . . . Ramon could hear him vaguely.

Ramon's infatuation for Paula was incomprehensible and irresistible. He knew what had happened to the other young men and he hated her for what had befallen Larry. Still he was powerless against his passion. Even his great love for Jenny Clinton could not overcome his mad desire to possess Paula.

THE clock in the Jefferson Market tower struck eleven.

I laid aside my book on the supernatural and stood up. I had read all there was to read, and I had delayed as long as I dared; even now I might be too late—and nobody knew so well as myself what terrible consequences that might have!

As it was, my forehead was sticky with a cold sweat; my underclothes were wet with it; and my hands shook as if with the ague. It was a horrible thing that I planned to do; the very thought of it made me sick to my stomach. But much more horrible were the consequences to myself and other young men, throughout the ages, if this job remained undone. Bucking myself up with a quick drink, I strode across my room to my bureau, opened one of the drawers, and

removed a long, evilly-shining knife.

It was a hunting knife, one that I had used the winter after graduation, when Larry and I went on a trip to the north woods. Thrusting it under my belt, well-hidden, I threw on my coat, picked up my hat and went out. Fifteen minutes later, I had left my taxi, and was shooting up in the elevator of No. —— Park Avenue to the sixteenth floor.

She *was standing in the doorway! Her eyes blazed with fires of wrath. . . .*

AS the elevator boy clanged shut the door behind me and started down again, I crossed over to Paula's door and rang the bell. Then I waited, my heart pounding. If all went well, if my theories were correct, there would be no answer. One minute passed . . . two. I breathed a sigh of relief. Then, quietly, I tiptoed to the door of the apartment alongside hers.

On my first visit to Paula, a man had come up in the elevator with me, in company with the manager of the building. While I was waiting for Paula to answer my ring, the manager had stepped to this other apartment and, without bringing out his keys, had opened the door. "This is the empty apartment I spoke of," he had said to his companion, and they both stepped inside. . . . And now my one prayer was that this suite was still empty, and the door still unlocked. Everything depended upon that!

I TURNED the knob noiselessly; pushed. The door swung open, showing the vacant rooms beyond. Stepping inside, I carefully closed the door behind me. Then I hurried through the empty rooms to a small pantry, overlooking a side street.

Before coming up, I had examined the side of the tall building from the outside, to discover that in the very center, two small windows ran up the wall to the top floor, twenty floors above. These windows, obviously belonging to two separate bathrooms or pantries, and as obviously separating the apartments on each floor, were but two or three feet apart; and the one hope of success of my scheme lay in being able to swing from one window into the other. Throwing open the window of the empty pantry, I thrust my foot outside.

It was certainly a risky undertaking. Sixteen flights below I could see the glints of tiny automobiles and the scarcely visible forms of people, looking like ants. No ledge ran beneath the window; my only chance was in hanging from the one and swinging over to the other. Gritting my teeth, I put my other foot out and slid down till I hung from the sill.

I am no steeplejack, and I didn't dare look down. I hate even now to think what might have happened had I been dizzy. Edging along bit by bit to the corner of the sill, I glanced over at the other win-

dow, which now seemed a mighty long distance away. Then, with a swing of my body, I let go one hand.

I TEETERED. The force of my swing loosened the grip of my other hand that held the sill, and I felt it slip. I clawed at the air, and felt it slip further. Then, with one supreme effort, I writhed upward —and grasped the sill of Paula's window. The window was partly raised, and in another moment I was clutching the sill with both hands and drawing myself inside. And then I stopped for breath and to look around.

It was a pantry, exactly like the one beside it, but quite as empty. The door beyond was closed, and tiptoeing gently, I crossed and opened it.

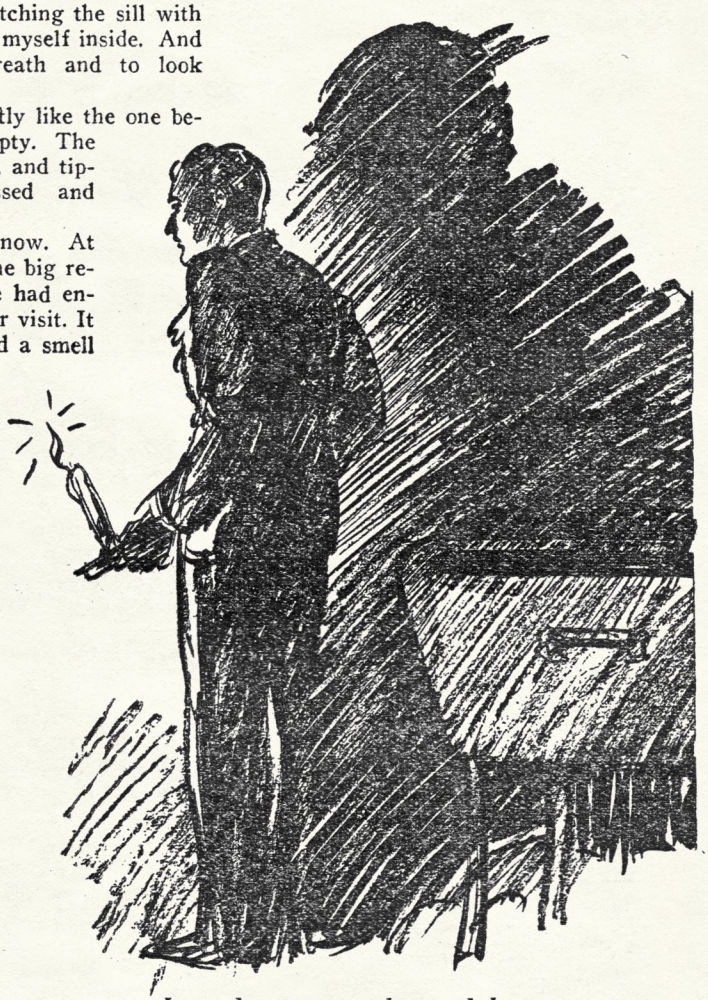
I was in a corridor now. At my left it opened into the big reception room where she had entertained me on my other visit. It was dark there now, and a smell of stale incense filled the air and almost nauseated me. . . . Or was it another odor that nauseated me? And suddenly I remembered the origin of the custom of piling flowers by a dead body, and I shuddered. Immediately, however, I turned my glance toward the right.

In the vague light from the city below, which seeped through a window here and there, I could follow the corridor with my eyes for some twenty feet, when it disappeared into the darkness. Several doors opened from it, and now, walking lightly on the thick long rug, my heart thumping within me, I turned and started down it.

The first door showed me a bed-chamber, luxuriously furnished. The bed in it was unoccupied. I moved on to the next room, which proved to be a library, the walls of which were stacked high with thick, mysterious-looking volumes, brown with age. I even saw a glassed-in shelf, piled with worn manuscripts, probably carefully penned by scholars in the long-ago days before printing. I moved on to the third door, which was closed; and after a moment's hesitation, I gently opened it. And immediately I caught my breath in a startled gasp.

The room was furnished in a fashion of which even some ancient Egyptian queen might have been proud, while a heavy incense, far more voluptuous than any I had ever smelled, was wafted out almost to overpower me. Across the room burned a dim night-light, such as one found in the Middle Ages; and by its faint rays I vaguely made out that which had made me gasp.

It was Paula Delrio. She was lying on



I turned to go out—and stopped short

her back in bed, her beautiful body outstretched beneath gorgeous white coverings of sinuous silk. Her head lay on a pillow of exquisite beauty—yet it did not touch it. For, carefully spread on that priceless pillow was a coating of dark dry earth, an inch thick! And on this rested Paula's lovely head! Staring an instant, incredulous, I tiptoed over to her, my heart pounding harder than ever. And at last I was standing over her bed, looking down and holding my breath.

SHE lay, as I say, outstretched, still as death. Her clearcut lips, pale now, were parted; but no breath seemed to stir from them; nor in all that silence was there the slightest sound of breathing. And weirdest of all, her great dark eyes were open, gazing glassily, unseeingly, up at the ceiling! Dropping to my knees, I pressed my ear against her heart.

It did not beat. Nor was there any sign of movement in her pulse. That beautiful body lay there, stiff in death!

Very, very faintly, far, far below, I heard the impatient tooting of automobile horns, waiting for the policeman's signal at the Park Avenue crossing. I yearned toward that safe, modern sound, but it seemed ages removed from me; for, here in twentieth century New York, I was caught in the toils of an age of mystery. Soon, in a very few minutes in fact, that beautiful corpse—with the stroke of midnight—would come to life; and then the web that had been spun around me would tighten, and I would sink down into the obscene eternity in which she now lay.... There was only one chance for escape. Drawing my knife from my belt, with trembling hand I raised it high, above the girl's heart.

For a moment it was suspended there, while I gathered strength for the thrust. And then I glanced into her eyes.

They were still glassy, still gazed unseeingly at the ceiling. But now a shadow crossed them, a shadow I once saw in a snake's gorgeously repulsive eyes as it writhed in death throes after an automobile wheel had passed over its body.

I stood up, fascinated, the knife still upheld. I gazed at the eyes; leaned forward, and gazed straight down into them. And now, as they stared straight into mine, I saw that shadow was a look of hatred and of venom that made me shudder. But, buoyed by my determination, I lowered the knife over her heart.

Slowly, slowly, it descended. It touched the coverings; sank through them; touched something else. And with that, the body beneath me trembled from head to foot.

Suddenly I stopped. My God, what was I doing? murdering a lovely girl in her sleep? I passed my hand in bewilderment across my sweating forehead. Vampire or not, I could never drive a knife through her heart! And suddenly I slung the knife across the room and rushed out of the door.

A sense of nightmare horror pursued me. I ran down the dark corridor and into the gorgeous large reception room. I ran across that, stumbling over the furniture, and into the little entry that gave onto the outer hall. Here I grasped the knob and pulled . . . to find that the door was locked and the key removed.

And at that moment, far away, I heard the faint notes of the clock in the Metropolitan tower striking twelve!

For a moment I stood there, dazed, in the darkness. And even in that moment a curious, subtle feeling commenced to steal over me—the realization of a terrible presence that was stirring into wakefulness. Suddenly I remembered the window by which I had entered. Perhaps I could crawl back into the other apartment; or, lacking time for that, I could at least throw myself out onto the pavement far below. Anything was better than the doom that awaited me, were I once more to face this girl, here in her own stronghold! Turning around, I ran, swiftly and noiselessly back across the reception room and down the corridor to the little pantry door.

Even as I slipped inside, I saw a widening light on the rug in the corridor further down, showing that Paula was opening her chamber door and stepping outside. Once in the pantry, I gently closed the door with trembling fingers, turned about to cross to the window—and stopped short, my heart in my mouth.

I HAVE often since wondered how I lived through that night. Man, even the most phlegmatic (for such a man has greater powers of resistance than the merely courageous man) can stand only so many shocks; then something happens. I had in store for me that night terrible experiences, some perhaps of which were even more awful than the one that startled me now. But for the rest I was more or less prepared; for this, I was not. And the sight that greeted me as I turned to the window, coupled with

certain knowledge, made my heart for the moment stop its beating.

For I knew I was sixteen floors above the dark street; and I knew from bitter experience that there was no ledge beneath that window. And yet, as I watched, a hand appeared, creeping up the side of the pane, the fingers widespread, like the tenuous legs of a spider!

The light was faint, and I could see it only in outline; but that was enough. For there was something about those long gaunt fingers that even ordinarily would have made me shudder. They were so death-like . . . and yet so strong! They crept slowly upward as if, like a fly, the mere touch on the pane was sufficient to hold the person behind them. And then another hand appeared, with the black sleeve falling from the wrist . . . and at last the head.

It rose slowly above the sill, with the smooth rhythm of a machine. I could only see its outline, because of the light behind it. But when the eyes appeared, I could see those. They blazed through the darkness, gazing directly at me, while I crouched in the corner. Then the fingers reached inside, clawing at the sash of the window I had partly closed, opening it wider. A leg was noiselessly thrust over the sill; and a moment later the tall figure of a "man" stepped inside.

I crouched protectively in my corner, but I gave myself up for lost; for even as he quietly crossed the room toward me, I felt that hypnotic power sinking into my brain, making me powerless. He came slowly forward, his eyes always turned toward me. And then, suddenly, as he was abreast of me, I muffled a surprised cry.

The person beside me was my old chum, Larry Wright, long since dead and laid in his grave!

"Larry!" My voice was a tremulous whisper.

HE did not answer me. But his eyes never left mine as those deathlike fingers reached for the door knob. And then, suddenly, as I watched this figure—the obscenely-living figure of one of the two people most dear in all the world to me—my fear departed for a moment, leaving only an overwhelming pity and sorrow. Impulsively, I reached out and touched that cold hand.

"Larry!" I whispered again; "Larry, old fellow. . . ."

Then an amazing thing happened. For one second those inhuman, blazing eyes that stared at me changed. They became *human;* and in them was a tragic look I never again hope to see. . . . And in a second the expression was cold and deathlike again, and he moved on, out to the corridor, closing the door behind him . . . leaving me to catch my breath at the thought of the horror that was his—and that awaited me. A moment later I heard the sound of voices.

THEY were soft, those voices, soft and dry like the rustle of autumn leaves along the grass at night; and in them was a dead quality I had never before noticed, and that made me shudder.

"I felt him; I know he was there." It was Paula's voice, soft, but cold as steel. "He stood above me, gazing into my grave!"

"And the knife?" It was Larry's dead voice that spoke.

"I found it across the room. See? This is where it pricked me. There are no signs on the blade, because it is early, and I have not yet feasted. . . ."

"Then come!" he impatiently interrupted; "he is no longer here! Come, or the night will be gone! And we have much to do. . . ." The voices faded away as they moved across the reception room. Far off, I heard a window being opened. Then all was still again.

For a long time I remained motionless. Then, taking a grip on myself, I crept out to the corridor. There I stopped to listen.

The apartment was silent. More than that, I knew the place was deserted, save for myself. Running across the reception room, I entered the little hallway. The window at the end of it was open, and hurrying down to it, I glanced outside.

It gave on an alleyway, so dark that at first I could see nothing. Then, far, far below me, I made out two small dark figures. Were they the forms of the two vampires? And if so, how did they get down the bare side of that high building—*unless they crawled down, like lizards?* Whatever the answer, I did not long stop to consider; for suddenly another thought struck me.

They had much to do, Larry had said. In Paula's case, that could mean but one thing: the completing of her vile work on my friend, Jack Clinton! Swinging around, I ran down the hall, where, after a moment's search, I discovered the front door key on a tray on the table; and a few mo-

ments later I was outside, the door relocked, the key in my pocket. And, stepping into the elevator that ascended at my ring, I was soon on the street, hailing a taxi. A little less than an hour later, I was running up the stairs of the Clinton's home, where I impatiently rang the bell.

Jenny met me, her face sad, her eyes still wet with tears.

"I'm afraid it is all over, dear," she murmured; "the doctor examined poor Jack an hour ago. He said he might live through the night—and if he did, there was hope. But he was doubtful of Jack's ever seeing another day."

"BUT where is he?" I cried, as I chucked my hat on a chair; "Good God, Jenny! you people didn't leave him alone, did you?"

Jenny's father appeared at that, in the doorway.

"A competent nurse is at his side, day and night, Ray," he told me as he shook my hand; "what he needs more than anything else in the world, the doctor said, is a night of complete rest."

"Then let me go to him," I said, taking a step forward; "it might not be too late!"

But Mr. Clinton stepped before me, barring my way.

"No, no, Ray!" he protested; "I tell you rest is what he needs!"

I whirled angrily on him.

"And I tell you he will never get it, unless I go to his side! Let me go, Mr. Clinton!" I cried as he grasped my arm. "For God's sake, let me go to him! Already it may be too late, and if her lips have touched —" And then I stopped in confusion. To tell them the truth would only convince them of my madness.

But now Jenny was before me. She gently took both my hands in hers.

"'Her lips' you say, Ray?" she whispered; then, as I muttered an explanation: "You know something, Ray," she said, softly; "something you are afraid to tell us. . . ." While I stood there, realizing the possible tragedy in every wasted moment, she looked deep into my eyes. Then—as once an old Gypsy had done, long, long years ago—she stepped away with a startled cry. "Ray! Ray!" She stopped herself on her cry of horror, and stepped aside. "Go to him, Ray," she whispered in an awestruck voice.

I turned for one quick glance at the group: her father and her mother, who had just entered the hall, gazing questioningly from Jenny to me; the servants, whose curious heads had suddenly appeared at various doors; and Jenny, her eyes watching me with horror and pity, while the back of her hand was pressed against her mouth in an odd gesture of defense. Then I strode on, down the hall, the length of another long corridor, at the end of which I knew was the room in which the dying boy lay. Turning the knob, I softly opened the door.

The scene seemed peaceful enough at first. The lights were ablaze, and Jack lay in his bed, seemingly slumbering peacefully. Sleeping, too, was the stout young nurse at his side. I crossed over and shook her . . . but she did not move. And I recognized the deep trance in which I myself had more than once fallen. I turned again to the bed—and uttered a cry of horror.

His face had been partly hidden by the bed posts, so I did not see *it* from the door. But now I saw it, all too clearly, and a feeling of loathing and terror spread over me—

A bat. Black! small and sleek as a mouse. Its wings were peacefully folded; and it lay nestled on Jack's white throat. It's head was sunk deep, and from where I stood, I could not see it. With a snarl, I leaped across the floor, my outstretched fingers clutching at it.

I touched it. I still can feel that sleek, slimy body in my fingers, and to this day I shudder at the thought. But before I could close on it, it slipped away. It soared up, beyond my reach, headed for the open window; and there, on the sill, it alighted a moment, and turned its eyes toward me.

I can never forget that steady gaze. The eyes were bright green, and hard as buttons; the pupils were small as pinpoints in their unflinching stare. They were the eyes of a bat . . . but did I recognize in them another's eyes? Did a flare of recognition pass between us?

IN any case, I knew one thing: that in that gaze was the promise of my doom, should ever I be in *its* power—whatever *it* was. Even now, wakeful though I was, I felt that old influence slowly stealing across my brain; that old numbness followed it, and I found myself blinking to keep awake. Grasping a book, I hurled it at the rodent; and if it had rested there, it would have been flattened. But it flew away, and I never saw it again—in that form.

And now I turned to the motionless form

of my friend. But, pale and lifeless looking as he was, I was convinced that another victim had commenced his long, foul wanderings through eternity. And in a fit of rage, I whirled around and strode out of the room and down the corridor.

Jenny met me at the front door and stopped me.

"He is—he is—?" She could not say it.

And I, too, could not tell her what I thought.

"I do not know," I lied; and I moved to open the door.

But once again she detained me.

"Don't go, Ray!" she whispered, clinging to me. "I—I don't understand it all, but—but something tells me you go to your —your—"

I laughed harshly. The horror of the whole affair was embittering me against the world.

"Never fear, dearest," I told her; "no matter what happens—I will return to you!"

Did she instinctively understand what I meant? That if I did not return, an ordinary mortal, I should probably come back as a vile fiend to prey upon her?

She drew back, almost in repulsion.

"Not that!" she breathed; "no, not that!" And with this picture of her, I pulled open the door and stepped outside.

"For the sake of your eternal soul, beware of your wedding eve!"

The warning words of the Gypsy, written long ago for this very night, rang through my brain as I waited on a corner for a taxi. I knew well the peril I faced; knew that Paula now feared me above all human beings—feared and hated me; and that to return to her apartment was to court a terrible fate. What if she was waiting for me there—or came in while I was about my task?

BUT against that was the knowledge of the danger that always hung over me, no matter which way I turned—the danger to me, and to countless others, yet unborn; and that, plus a sudden, seething hate at what I believed to be the fate of Jack Clinton, urged me on in spite of hell itself!

It was late—much later than I realized —and my work must be soon accomplished, if ever it was to be done; for now I had a definite plan, a last desperate hope, dangerous as it was desperate. And to further delay matters, the taxi I at last found, had engine trouble and drove along at a snail's pace, while I impatiently sat drumming on the window sill. At last, however, it arrived at the imposing apartment building, and a few moments later the elevator deposited me before Paula's door.

Very noiselessly, I unlocked the door and pushed it open. Everything was dark and silent inside. I stepped into her entry and shut the door, locking it again. Then once more I stood, listening. Could she be inside the rooms, waiting for me?

I HEARD nothing, however, save the pounding of my own heart; and at last I felt my way into the great reception room, across this to the corridor, and down until I reached the third door. This I softly opened, and I looked in.

Paula's bedroom was empty, too. The night-light still burned by the rumpled bed, and I crossed over to it. Reaching the side of the pillow, I halted. For this was my objective.

I have told how an inch-thick layer of dirt was spread on this pillow, for her to rest her head in. At the time I saw it I was puzzled; as I was puzzled at my first visit here when she carefully brushed the few grains of dirt from her cheek and deposited them in a tray instead of dropping them to the floor. Suddenly, however, as I had driven to Jack Clinton's, I remembered a paragraph in the book on vampires. And then I understood.

"The vampire," it said, "must sleep always in his grave; otherwise he must decay, as must the body of an ordinary mortal. If he travels, *he takes dirt from his own grave in which to pass his death-like sleep!*"

As I stood above that pillow, in the silence and darkness of her chamber, I remembered again those words. Destroy his grave—or, in this case, *her* grave—and her obscene lease on life is ended; she must go the way of all flesh! Suddenly I picked up the pillow, and carrying it very carefully, in order not to spill a grain of dirt, I passed out of the room and started down the corridor.

In another moment I was in the pantry. Crossing to the window that had been left open, I pushed the pillow outside. Then, holding one end, I beat it against the wall.

The steady breeze that blew always at this height swept across the dry dirt. I saw it scatter, separate, blowing on the wind, out of sight. . . . And did I, at the same moment, hear a sigh? Or was it the wind?

In a moment the particles had disappeared, and drawing the pillow inside again,

I carefully dusted it and carried it back to the bedroom. I started to replace it on the bed; and then I stopped.

Beneath where it had lain, I saw a little key.

Stooping, I picked it up and looked at it. It must be an important key that she would hide beneath her pillow! And supposing it locked something in this apartment?

AGAIN I tiptoed to the door and listened. There was no sound in all the rooms. Running back to the hall, I made a quick but careful examination of the whole place, searching for a lock to fit this key.

I had to turn on the lights as I went, and soon the apartment was a blaze of light. But I went on, through the reception room again, examining thoroughly the walls for any sign of doorway; into the corridor, past her room; another; and yet another; and here I stopped. At the very end of the corridor, lost in the darkness despite the blaze of lights further back, was a small door, almost hidden in the wall. Feeling around, I discovered a keyhole and inserted my key. It fitted.

A moment later I was opening the door. I stepped into a small, darkened room and struck a match.

Slowly it blazed up. I saw dark unfinished walls, more like those of a closet than a room. The tiny flame danced up and down them, always brightening, until at last it picked out something at the far end—a heavy, mahogany coffin!

And that coffin, when I went over to examine it, was nearly half filled with dirt!

This, then, was the dirt of her grave, the dirt that was to supplement that I found on her pillow, should it be scattered! For a moment I stared at it; then, suddenly, I whirled around, and ran into another room, returning a moment later with a candle and a small fireplace shovel.

It must have been a weird sight. The coffin; the candle light flickering on the dark narrow walls; and a young man feverishly shoveling the dirt into a hod, filling it, running out to the pantry window, scattering it to the winds, and then returning for more. I know that I scarcely thought of anything but my task, so determined was I to destroy the power of this vampire. Once I did look at my watch and cried out in startled surprise when I realized how little time remained till dawn; but immediately forgetting my danger, I returned to work with renewed vigor.

And at last it was accomplished! The last grain of dirt that could be removed from that coffin had been thrown to the breeze; the hod, too, had been cleaned, and the little shovel. And now I returned for the last time to the tiny room.

Crossing the threshold, I walked over to the candle and picked it up. I gave one last glance at the coffin, to assure myself my work was done. . . . I turned to go out—and stopped short.

She was standing in the doorway!

Her face was always pale; but now that paleness was alive; she was livid. Her eyes blazed with fires of wrath that made me shrink; her cheeks were haggard, and her scarlet lips were drawn like a wolf's, showing canine-like teeth. But she did not cry out.

Instead, she stood there watching me with a venom that was poisonous in the glance. Then, slowly, she came toward me.

And how can I explain how I felt? A terrible fear overpowered me, so great that I would have done anything to replace that dirt of her grave. And then, as she came toward me, that old horrible numbness crept with snake-like fingers through my brain—to give birth to the *old longing for her!*

I backed away, until the coffin behind me halted me; and she came on. Those gorgeous eyes never left mine; those red, clear-cut lips quivered, as if waiting to pounce on their prey. And I, with every passing moment, felt stronger and stronger the desire to be that prey! Unable to stand any longer, I sank to my knees beside her coffin; and she came on until she stood directly above me. Then she halted.

"YOU could have had a death that would have been painless, beautiful." Her voice was soft, but deadly. "But now—" She laughed, and her cold laughter shot through me like a sword. I gazed up, fascinated, unable to speak. Deeper and deeper into my brain crept that haziness, until I could see nothing but her beautiful face looking down at me; and my hypnotized self cried out, voicelessly: *"take me! take me!"*

It is hard to tell what happened next. I know I heard once more that vindictive laugh; saw her swoop down upon me. I know her head was close to mine, and that immediately an excruciating pain, unequalled by any I have ever felt, shot through my body, a pain beside which the short agony I felt that first night she leaned

voluptuously over my bed was nothing.

And instead of abating, it became more and more unendurable with each passing moment. It was hell on earth, it was worse than hell! for Satan himself could not devise such torture through eternity!

And possibly the very intensity of the agony she inflicted upon me defeated her own purposes. For in its torture my brain slightly cleared for one little moment. And in that moment, the still small voice far down in me called out, silent, but intense.

"God help me!" it called; *"God! . . . Jenny, my Jenny!"*

The vampire drew back. Like a wolf, cheated in its prey, I saw her above me, snarling as she regarded me. She was no longer beautiful; no more than a hungry beast is beautiful.

For one moment she regarded me thus, while I flickered between consciousness and unconsciousness. Then, suddenly, she pitched forward, falling on the edge of her coffin.

Through the open door I could see a window down the corridor. And in that window once again filtered a stream of pure daylight!

Then I, too, sank into a deep coma.

"IT is interesting to speculate," remarked Professor Dodge, the well-known authority on subjects both psychic and psychological, "just where, what for a better term, we will call the 'natural,' ended, and the supernatural began—if it began at all."

We were seated on a bench in Washington Square, resting after our long walk, before we returned to my home, where the professor was our guest. Night had long since fallen, the inspiring, fresh night of a new spring. Over the University buildings to the east of the Square, the late moon was rising, glowing in the velvet sky.

"But Professor," I protested; "there is no question about it! Why—"

But the old man dropped his hand on my knee.

"There is no question about the wonder of it," he agreed; "but as to its all being supernatural—that I dare not pass judgment on. Have you ever," he suddenly demanded, "heard anything of the history of this Paula Delrio?"

I shook my head.

"Well, I have. I got it from a colleague, Matinski, who toured South America for just such data; and here it is:

"Paula Delrio is a Peruvian, of wealthy parents. From her earliest years she showed amazing psychic and hypnotic powers, and the results of this gift might have been interesting, had it not been for a curious tragedy.

"ONE day the girl was missing. A search was instituted, and toward dawn of the next day she was found at the edge of the woods, apparently dead, a victim of the vampire bat, a rare species known to science as the *desmodus rufus.* Natives had discovered her, superstitious Indian peasants; and fearing that a curse fall on their village—the curse of vampirism—they quickly dug a shallow grave and left her there. Fearing, on the other hand, the wrath of her family when they returned to the village, they said nothing about their find.

"The rest of the story has been pieced together, bit by bit. Through the long day Paula lay there, unconscious, covered by a few inches of dirt. Then, with the coming of night came consciousness and returning strength. She struggled from her grave and rose to her feet. And here is possibly the most amazing point, psychologically speaking, of the whole tale:

"The girl, remembering the attack by the bat, seeing the grave beneath her and the night about her, believed that what the Indians feared had come to pass; she believed herself that she was a vampire! And so strong were her hypnotic powers that they turned on herself, *causing her from that day on, to go into a trance from sun-up till midnight!"*

I gasped in astonishment.

"You mean—" I commenced.

"Oh, it's not so uncommon," interrupted the professor; "science is full of tales of men who thought themselves beasts and acted accordingly; of many, many other like tales of self-hypnotism. This, however, is my first meeting with a human whose self-hypnotic powers were great enough to govern others likewise. . . . The rest of her story is simple. Fearing the vengeance of the natives, should they see the 'vampire' return, she found means to escape to this country, capturing somehow before she left one of those rare vicious bats, which she believed to be her *alter ego,* and which she trained as such."

"But the deaths, Professor!" I exclaimed; "those many deaths that doctors could not account for!"

"Death from the attack of the vampire bat," he replied simply; "that was a new

one on medical science in these parts, and they could not account for it. Somehow she trained the beast to seek out her intended victim—I don't know enough about the bat to explain how; possibly somewhat as one trains a bloodhound."

I sat for a moment in silence, gazing at the trembling young leaves of the tree in front of me. Then at last I turned to him.

"BUT that does not account for many things, Professor," I said, quietly; "the voice I heard in the elevator well—the voice of my poor friend, Larry Wright—the actual sight of him, and of others; and, finally the fact that the bat actually was transformed into the woman herself. I swear to it! I saw it!"

The professor smiled.

"'You saw it'!" he repeated; "do you not know how deceptive is the eye-sight? Have you not often heard tales of the Hindu fakirs, who toss their ropes into the air, and then climb them, in the full view of multitudes? Surely you must realize the power of hypnotism! And it can work both ways—sometimes reacting against the hypnotist. First, you say, came the web she wove around your brain; your friend's death put you in a receptive mood for that. All sorts of visions came to your mind to draw you to her. But what means could a healthy brain like yours employ to combat her, once she had you in her power? *The same means she employed herself!* In your receptive mood, you easily could hypnotize yourself, seeing your friend appear with his kind warning—a warning your own brain *felt* with her first subtle attempt upon it!"

"And the Gypsy's note—written ten years earlier?" I questioned; "how do you account for that?"

The professor rose.

"My dear boy," he said; "you must realize that when I say a thing is 'natural' in its causes, that does not mean I restrict everything to what we understand with our poor stunted senses. There are forces far beyond that—which are yet natural: hypnotism—thought waves—the power, such as your Gypsy's, of looking into the future; the power of the dead to communicate with the living—shall we arbitrarily say that does not exist? And finally," and now he looked down at me with solemn eyes; "finally, who shall say that my explanation for the conduct of Paula Delrio is correct? Who dares claim, conclusively, that vampires do not exist, that the dead do not walk the streets at night, lost souls, hunting for peace throughout eternity?" He stopped. Out of the darkness appeared two forms, a man's and a woman's, chatting gaily.

It was Jack Clinton and his cousin Jenny, now my wife. For, contrary to my belief after my hurried examination of him, Jack was alive, and finally pulled through his illness; while the day after my last experience with Paula, weak as I was, I married Jenny. I did not want another wedding eve, after those terrible predictions!

They came to us, smiling when they saw us.

"We thought we might find you here," cried Jenny, "though it's after midnight, and all good professors should be in bed! Come along, and we'll pick up a supper and then march off to our rooms!" And she led the way down the leafy walk to our apartment, across the Square. A few steps further, however, she halted.

"It's that poor woman again, Jack," she whispered. "Haven't you got a dollar to give her?" she asked, turning to me.

She came along, tottering feebly, resting heavily on a cane. She was unbelievably emaciated; I have never seen a living being so wasted away.

And she came on, muttering to herself; dragged on, by sheer force of will. When she was abreast of me, I stepped in front of her, holding out a bill.

"Here, madam," I said, rather embarrassed; "if you don't mind . . . perhaps this will help you?"

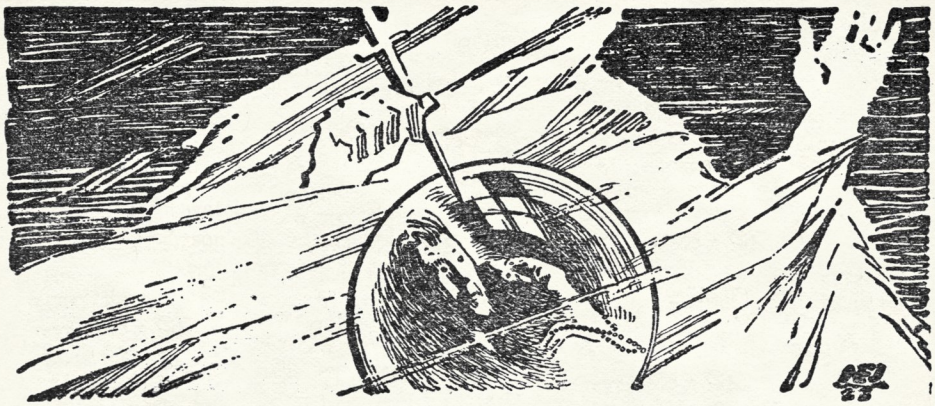
She stopped at that and looked up at me. The shadow of leaves against the moonlight flitted across her face; but it did not hide her eyes, so piercing that instinctively I backed away. I was looking into the eyes of Paula Delrio. . . .

A MOMENT she regarded me with that keen gaze; then a haze seemed to pass before her eyes. She turned away, no longer interested in me.

"Money?" she muttered; "what should I do with money?" She moved on with dragging feet. "They take away my grave," she murmured, querulously, "and offer me money. What shall I do with money when they take away my grave?"

I stood watching her as she dragged on. Soon I could hear her mutterings no longer. Then the woman hobbled out into the Square and was swallowed in the darkness of the Arch.

THE END



SPIRIT TALES

Body of Drowned Boy Recovered Through a Medium—A Ghost Lives for Centuries—Phantom Lorry causes Fatal Accident in England

By COUNT CAGLIOSTRO

FROM Toledo, Ohio, comes the strange story thoroughly verified, of the recovery of the body of a drowned youth though the agency of a spirit medium. Thousands of residents in that city and vicinity are still asking themselves how and why the swollen waters of the Ottawa river gave up the victim's body only after aid had been sought from disembodied spirits.

John Scott, nineteen-year-old Waite High School graduate, who resided in Toledo, went canoeing with a companion at midnight, Saturday, March 15th, in the Ottawa river at Point Place on Maumee Bay, six miles north of his home. The canoe capsized. His friend swam ashore but John was drowned.

For three days rescuers searched unsuccessfully for Scott's body. Policemen and deputy sheriffs toiled hour after hour, day and night, in an unceasing attempt to retrieve the victim of the river tragedy from his watery grave.

They used drag-nets and grappling hooks but their search was not rewarded and they were about to give up the task and admit defeat.

Then an inspiration came to the dead boy's brother. He remembered that an old friend of the family's was a spirit medium. With other members of his family, he sought her aid.

On the afternoon of March 19th, the medium accompanied by the victim's brother and two other friends, went to the bank of the river. There the four stood holding hands. A prayer was offered quietly and reverently for the recovery of the missing boy's body.

The medium closed her eyes for a brief period. Then she looked out over the waters, and pointing to a spot in the river 200 yards from the Toledo Beach traction line bridge, announced dramatically:

"The body of John Scott is there."

Although the police and sheriffs had crossed and re-crossed this same spot many times with their grapples and nets, Kenneth Scott and his friends proceeded in a rowboat to the place indicated by the medium. After several futile attempts they finally located the body and brought it ashore where a group of bewildered spectators stood in awed silence after witnessing the wonderful demonstration of psychic phenomena.

Among them were two of the drowned

youth's classmates. The pair had maintained a ceaseless vigil since the tragedy.

The Oldest Ghost in the World

IT is currently believed that the oldest spirit on this earth, who has definitely proven himself, is the spirit of Brother Johannes, who was the private pastor of Oliver Cromwell. Old Brother John so loved the ancient abbey, which was his home, that he has continued to make it his favorite abiding place through these three centuries, notwithstanding the fact that all that remains of the abbey is a rubble of stones.

The old monk wrote his name large in the annals of psychic science when, some years ago, he guided a searching party to a spot where the golden altar service of his church was buried. No living man knew of the existence of these relics, of which there was not the slightest hint or record. No living eye had rested on these sacred utensils in over three hundred years. Yet this living dead man glided or floated ahead of the exploring party and indicated the exact spot where they were to dig, and where these interesting and valuable old relics were uncovered.

However, this personality, who so ably and completely identified himself, must step aside in favor of an entity, who lived at a period so remote that we are quite incapable of appreciating the tremendous lapse of time between him and ourselves. For the being that appeared recently before the Polish Psychical Research Society, during a series of sittings held with the non-professional and private medium, Franék Kluski, bore all the earmarks of being an "elemental" who was none other than old *Pithecanthropus Erectus,* the walking ape-man, himself.

Until the recent discovery of the "Peking man" at Peking, China, this ape-man was the oldest of all our known primitive ancestors. The top of his skull, some of his teeth, and one of his thigh bones were discovered by Dr. Dubois, a Dutch surgeon, in Trinil, Java, in strata which correspond to the later Pliocene—that is before the *First Glacial Age.* This is estimated as between 500,000 and 600,000 years ago—over a half a million years.

The skull of this great-great grandfather of ours shows a brain pan of a capacity that is half way between that of a chimpanzee and that of a man. The thigh bone belonged to a creature equipped for standing and running like a man, and because of this faculty, free to use his hands, and free to develop his brain. This monster was re-discovered in Warsaw, Poland, during a seance at which were present Mr. and Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, of the British College of Psychic Science, and seven Polish ladies and gentlemen, identified with various scientific activities in Poland.

The presence of an inferior "control" was inferred during the manifestation of the *Pithecanthropus,* as a restraining influence on this fearsome creature, who was evidently brought for the purpose of giving the scientists an object lesson in biology.

Mrs. McKenzie and several of the other sitters attest they saw the face and the hairy back of this ape-like creature, who touched them repeatedly. The materialized form was described in the Society Proceedings as being that of "a creature of the height of an adult man, with a body which was thickly covered with hair, a large mane, and a tangled beard. It was clothed as though *d'une peau craquante.* Its appearance was that of a beast, or a very primitive man. It did not speak, but it emitted raucous sounds with its lips, flapped its tongue about, and gnashed its teeth, trying in vain to make itself understood. When it was called, it moved towards the sitters and let them stroke its hairy skin. It touched their hands and scratched them very gently, with claws rather than nails. It obeyed the voice of the medium and did not hurt the sitters, whom it only gently touched. This was an improvement, as at former seances, this creature had shown brutish violence. It had an obvious tendency and a tenacious desire to lick the faces and the hands of the sitters who resisted these disagreeable caresses. It obeyed every order given by the medium, not only when this order was expressed by word, but even when it was only willed."

The phenomena at these Polish seances were varied. It is, however, interesting to note that, at five out of the seven sittings held, this semi-human monster was materialized. On one or two occasions he made himself very much at home, squatting familiarly among the sitters. It is also noteworthy that at two of the seances a large bird, resembling an eagle or a vulture was materialized. In one of the illustrations reproduced in the *Revue Metapsychique,* this bird is seen clearly perched on the

left shoulder of the medium. The ape-man, however, refused to allow himself to be photographed. It is hoped by the Polish Psychical Research Society, however, that it may ultimately be possible to coax this materialized entity within the focus of the flashlight camera.

Mrs. St. Clair Stobart who translated the Polish "Proceedings" for the "Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science" has this very interesting observation to make in connection with these astounding seances.

She says: "Clearly the distinguishing feature of these sittings was the materialization of the semi-human entity which out-Calibanned Caliban, and we may well ask ourselves 'What are the deductions to be drawn from such unpleasant manifestations?' The enemies of psychic science will at once point to it as an example of the evils with which Spiritualism is beset, and will assert that we ought not to expose ourselves to the influences of low-grade elementals who seem to be as free to manifest as are the higher grade spirits. But seekers after truth will not be diverted from their quest by the possibility of unpleasant experiences. If the desirability of the acquisition of knowledge were to be gauged by the attendant unpleasantness, risks, and dangers, all laboratories must immediately be closed.

"The first duty of researchers is research. Spiritualism is not a drawing room game, conducted for purposes of entertainment. It is a science which treats of the greatest of all subjects, the continuity of life and consciousness, and even though it may at first shock the arrogant egoism of man's presumptive claim that students will rejoice at the insight into the life beyond, afforded by a manifestation of a less than human entity."

It is now pretty generally conceded, by students of psychic science, that dogs have a continued existence, just as have their masters. If this be admitted, it would be difficult to deny the possession of the same continuity of existence to any form of life —even to those forms which have lived on earth in dizzily remote periods of time. The Polish scientists have certainly given us fascinating food for thought along these lines.

The Pow-Wow Cult Terror

FROM York County, Pennsylvania, the home of "hexing" and modern witchcraft, comes another practice that is having dire results. This is what is known as pow-wowing and is carried on by members of a cult who are being rounded up as dangerous to the public welfare.

Pow-wow healing, for centuries deeply rooted in the lives of the residents of this section, has been going on unmolested. But when, not long ago, it was blamed for the death of five children, a group was organized to investigate the practices of the healers.

It was found that while mysterious hymns were being chanted over their failing bodies, these babies were allowed to die, without being given the slightest medical attention. The Pow-wowers, claiming Divine guidance, had let the same thing take place in the cases of other children and adults without number, it was learned. The York County Medical Society brought out the fact that unscrupulous bands of men and women were thus playing upon credulous minds and stripping members of the community of thousands of dollars yearly.

The State was also prepared to deal harshly with one of the local pow-wowers who, with two of his associates, was responsible for the slaying of a farmer in the vicinity. The men admitted that they had gone to his home to secure a lock of his hair which, they believed, would break the spell laid upon the family of one of them.

The Three Marys

NOT one ghost—but three traveling in company are the bane of existence to the natives of Manila, the second largest city in the Philippine Islands. The *Tatlong Marias,* or the Three Marys, are black-robed headless sisters whose presence in the town is believed to bring death and destruction.

When, a year ago, news spread that the Three Marys had been seen abroad after nightfall and were leaving death in their wake, thousands of Filipinos dashed out and placed white crosses on their doors. Almost overnight seventy-five per cent of the native houses in Manila appeared with an X either chalked on the plaster walls or formed of white flowers.

According to those who know, the sisters return periodically and make nightly calls from door to door. Inevitably, the person who answers their knock will be stricken

by a fatal illness. But—if a white cross is boldly flaunted upon the wall, that home will be passed by, for the sisters are powerless against the efficacy of the sacred symbol.

From the Philippines also comes the more ghostly belief held by the Atlas, a pagan mountain tribe. This recently resulted in the death of a Chinese store owner and three others who were killed in order to fulfill the tribal superstition that a wife must be buried with the hands of four murdered persons in order to enter paradise.

Can Ghosts Cause Road Accidents?

THE startling suggestion that a number of road accidents along a certain stretch of highway between Sheffield and Manchester (England) have been caused by psychic agency, has been advanced by Mr. Stuart Rodger, an English coroner. At an inquest on February 17th, 1930, at Hyde, Cheshire, over which Mr. Rodger presided, some amazing evidence was forthcoming. It was disclosed that Albert Collinson, an omnibus driver, was motor-cycling along this stretch of road on December 30th, 1929, with his cousin Mr. Ridgway riding pillion. Both men were later found, unconscious, near a cross-roads; Ridgway died an hour later, while Collinson remained in hospital for a month, with a fractured skull. In the course of his testimony before the coroner, Collinson said that while riding his motorcycle on the fatal night he had suddenly seen a large motor-vehicle backing out of a side road. He could remember nothing beyond that. But other motorists who were present at the time of the affair declared that no motor-vehicle backed out of a side road, and furthermore, there was no side road at that spot.

This stretch of highway, only a few hundred yards in length, remarked the Coroner, had been a death-trap for years. In that small area of road twenty accidents had taken place in the previous twelve months, while an average of one per month has been recorded during the past eight years.

In summing up the evidence, the Coroner said, "It must have been a phantom lorry." Turning to the jury he remarked, "If you could go there, say, at midnight, it might be interesting to you and me."

Weird stories of ghostly happenings are told by residents of houses facing the fatal stretch of highway. Mr. William Gratton, landlord of the five-hundred-year-old "New Inn," states that mysterious footsteps are always heard outside his inn shortly before a road accident. He says:

They sound exactly like a rather heavily-built man walking up to the back door, hesitating, then walking away again. They are always the same. I have flung open the door again and again so suddenly that a human being would have found it impossible to escape me, even if there were any hiding place. I have noticed that the sound is almost invariably the warning of an impending crash.

Mr. E. B. Rice, a gentleman who often drives in the neighborhood, says he has frequently met a phantom lorry between Daventry and Coventry. "I met it last Monday" (February 17th, 1930) he stated to a London newspaper reporter. "I saw a lorry in front of me going in the same direction as my car. I jammed on my brakes and when I stopped I found no lorry was there."

Mr. and Mrs. Simister, whose bungalow faces the fatal length of road, report that for six years they have been disturbed by the noise of slow, heavy footsteps, and voices coming out of the darkness. Their dog has frequently dashed out into the street and returned trembling and whining.

A strange feature of the accidents which take place at this sinister spot is that so many are entirely unaccountable. Motor cars left standing with engines running have been known to start themselves, without any ascertainable cause, and on one occasion four people walking along the footpath were knocked down by a car—but no car had mounted the path.

READERS are invited to send brief accounts of personal experiences with the occult to The Meeting Place. The correspondent's full name and address must be signed to each letter but we will print only the initials or pseudonym if it is requested. No payment will be made for these contributions.

Here is a chance to get in touch with persons all over the world who are interested in the supernatural!

A Farewell Kiss

IN THE house where I was born, a two-story, two-family farm house near Farmington, Maine, my devoted parents and I lived happily during my infancy. They were a very affectionate couple, and Father would often steal up to mother unexpectedly, place his arms around her waist, and kiss her on the back of her neck. This pleased Mother very much, of course, and her joy was rapture to Father.

One cold winter's night, while seated before the fireplace, Father suddenly turned to Mother, who was holding me, an infant, in her arms, and said earnestly:

"I don't believe in ghosts, or in the departed ever returning, but suppose we promise each other that whichever one leaves this world first will, if possible, let the other one know that death has come."

"All right," mother answered. "We'll promise that, even though we may be in the same room at the time—not to frighten, but just to give a message, or a signal, so the other will know that we have been parted by death."

I was too young to realize what was being said, and did not understand the meaning until years afterwards when Mother told me about it, and what followed.

When I was but one and a half years old, Father joined the army in the Civil War. Mother's sorrow at parting was pitiful to witness, and even made an impression on me, although so young that I could not fathom the seriousness of the situation.

As they kissed each other in parting, Mother remarked: "Now, Charles, if anything happens to you, don't forget our promise."

"I won't forget, dear," he assured her, and with tear-dimmed eyes he left us at the main entrance to our home, this entrance being in the middle of the front of the house.

Mother and I went to our apartment which was on the first floor to the right, while Father's family lived on the left. Sorrow had entered our home, for Father was gone. Would he ever return? was the question ever uppermost in Mother's mind. Time only could tell.

Upon his arrival in New York City, Father was taken ill with measles. He was sent to a hospital, and Mother was kept informed by mail of his condition. Finally she recieved good news, Father was almost well, and would be discharged from the hospital in a few days and start for the South to join his regiment.

Shortly after receiving news of his recovery, Mother was sitting in front of the fireplace. I was asleep in my crib, and no one else, so far as Mother knew, was present in the room, but suddenly a cold wind struck

her, as though someone had opened a window or a door, and at the same time she felt the pressure of arms around her waist and the imprint of a kiss on the back of her neck.

Mother looked around quickly, but whoever, or whatever it was, disappeared as quickly as it had come. She was not frightened, for she thought that it was one of the children who lived in the other part of the house, for they often crept in quietly to play a trick on her.

She rose and looked behind the chairs, and under the table to find the child whom she felt sure was somewhere waiting for her to spy him. She found no one, however, so crossed the hall to inquire if any of the family had been in her apartment. All replied in the negative.

Suddenly the thought of father's promise came to her, and Mother exclaimed in a heart-broken tone:

"Charles is dead!" She sobbed uncontrollably for awhile, and then added: "That was his spirit, and he has fulfilled his promise. He came and gave me his farewell kiss. We'll know the worst soon."

My grandparents tried to console her, and to dispel her idea that Father was dead and had come to let her know, but it was all of no use, for Mother would say: "I know it was Charles. The news will soon come that he is dead."

Before the day passed a messenger arrived with the sad news that father had suffered a relapse, having caught cold, and that he had died suddenly and unexpectedly.

Father had kept his promise and mother carried the remembrance of his parting message of affection to her grave—a sweet but sad memory.

LORENZO SMELLEDGE.

Oakville, Connecticut.

How the Timely Appearance of a Phantom Saved His Life

IN WRITING this account over my signature, it is needless to say that I can vouch for the veracity of this narrative.

Four years ago I was employed as stationary engineer by a large manufacturing concern. At the end of two years of successful operating, I met with an accident and had to go to a hospital for an operation. After seven weeks I resumed my regular duties again and operated the plant three months longer when the company sold out. Many of the old employees were laid off. I was among them. A few days later I got a job as night engineer. My duties were to operate the plant from 5 P. M. till 9 P. M. and after shutting down the engine, and cleaning the fires for the morning-run, I had to go on watchman duty. My job was pretty hard but as it paid far better than my day operating ever had, I intended to make a go of it.

It took me six month's to get used to the dismal place. The large antique buildings were surely not inviting in daytime and much less so at night. It surely was no pleasure to make the rounds after midnight when all the other hands had gone home. Frequently large sewer rats jumped from under my very feet and plunged into the open drain channels. This was about the worst I expected. Even though my studies of the last ten years of psychic science had brought me in contact with a number of very interesting phenomena, up to this time, I had never come in contact with a materialized spirit; according to the experience of a number of able writers on occultism, in order to secure a good materialization it takes some paraphernalia such as a good Medium, cabinets, and darkened rooms, with only faint red lights.

That may be true, but my experience was the contrary. Every detail of the occurrence is still fresh in my mind, as the timely appearance of two specters saved my life. Our pay day was Saturday, and Saturday night the power was shut off as there was seldom over-time work, but Friday night was a hard run, this gave me little time for lunch around midnight. So one Friday night after a hard run the main work was finished at 11:45 P. M. As usual, I made the midnight round and got back to the engine room at 12:10. After coaling up again, I ate my lunch. My next round was not due until 12:45 and as I was comfortably seated in an armchair, I figured on reading for a few minutes, Somehow the newspaper didn't interest me and I gave up the idea and consulted my chronometer. It lacked five minutes to go the round and alas, I must have dozed, but on awakening, before I looked up, it seemed as if someone were watching me. Slowly I raised my eyes, and there standing directly before my chair, was a man of about 28 years of age. I judged him to be about five feet two inches tall; he had a round face and black hair, parted in the center. He wore a blue

shirt with the sleeves cut away above the elbows. He just stood there watching me as though ready to spring at me. This gave me such a jolt that I was on my feet within a second's time, ready, at least, for a stubborn defense. As I carried no gun I had to match physical strength with the intruder. But to my amazement just as I tried to call out, "How in the world did you get in here?" the man vanished into thin air. Immediately I went to the outer door which I found bolted on the inside. He could not have entered or left there and the windows could not be opened, as there was a pile of soft coal on the outside pressing against the sheeting. Furthermore, there were no foot-prints besides my own in the dusty alley ways. The only other exit was the fire boxes of the high pressure boilers and surely he did not go through there. He could not have been human, but an apparition. Figure as I would, the thing was beyond my reckoning. As I again consulted the chronometer I was only five minutes late for the 12:45 round. The night passed without other incident. Of course, I said nothing about it for they would only have laughed at me. As the days went by, it began to fade in my memory until a week had passed and again Friday night arrived.

After finishing my work, which was unusually heavy that night, it was 1:00 A. M. before I took my lunch. At 1:30 I sat in the old arm-chair resting a bit—to prevent falling asleep, I held a wrench in my hands. If I lost consciousness the wrench would drop on my feet and wake me in a second. Presently the wrench dropped. I wakened with a start, and again I had the peculiar feeling that somebody was watching me. As I looked ahead, I saw no one and my next thought was to consult the chronometer. As I turned my head, I beheld the phantom of my beloved grandfather who had passed away some twenty odd years before. He was standing at arms length from my chair; he wore the sweetest smile but changed to a worried look in a second—then he slowly melted away. This happened directly under a 100 Watt electric light bulb burning as brightly as day. By this time I realized that there was trouble brewing.

Station No. 18 was located in office room No. 1 and in following the round on a short cut you would pass through room No. 2 to reach station No. 19, but for some reason or other, call it fear if you like, after punching No. 18 something would not let me go into room No. 2 for the short cut. Therefore, I took the long distance each hour. It was still dark when at five A. M. I made the last round carrying only an old lantern. After my relief man came in I went home, never mentioning a word.

On returning Saturday night the superintendent summoned me. On entering the office wholly unconcerned, I was told that the night before burglars had looted the office. They had tried to get the payroll, but fortunately the money was still in the bank. Of course, they did some damage to the office furniture, breaking a number of locks, and at the door leading from room No. 1 into room No. 2 was found a thirty-six inch iron bar on the inside of the door. Therefore, if I had ventured into room No. 2 at any time after I saw the phantom of dear old grandfather, it would have meant instant death to me at the hands of the burglars.

For a few seconds one could have heard a pin drop as the superintendent and I stood there looking at the iron bar. Finally he said, "Lucky boy."

FREDERICK BEY.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

An Experience With the Subconscious Mind

I AM submitting the following experience hoping you may find a place for it in your magazine. This happening was related to me by my father who was one of the students concerned and with whom the professor shared his experience.

Several students in the senior class at the college my father attended had been having a great deal of difficulty in solving a particularly hard problem. They took it up with their professor of mathematics and he attempted to solve the problem himself.

He had discussed the possibility of a solution with a friend but the man had left town before they had an opportunity to work it out satisfactorily.

One morning, however, the professor went to his study and found the problem correctly solved. The figures were unmistakably his. Yet, he had not been working on the problem for a few days. The house was securely locked and no one could have copied his writing so perfectly. The professor was forced to believe that he had come downstairs in his sleep and worked out the solution while in that state.

Willoughby, Ohio. M. F. ROBISON.

An Apparition

I AM a child of the North. When I grew up I learned the sagas of the northland before I learned to read. When I was able to read I had access to "A Thousand and One Nights" and other fairy tales. Besides learning the mythology of the land, I cultivated fervently my all too ready belief in gnomes, ghosts, and fairies.

When I was but eight years old I had to pass a graveyard on my way to and from school. School was over at four o'clock in the afternoon and it was usually dusk by the time I reached the cemetery—alone—because none of the other children lived in that direction. As soon as the tomestones were visible to me, I started to run fast for fear the dwarfed spruce trees in their white shrouds would reach forth and grab me. I was terrified in the dark at that age and always imagined strange things and seemed to hear queer sounds. It seemed to me that all spirits must be evil.

A few years later I was walking in the moonlight—alone. It was a clear, cold, beautiful night in mid-winter. The snow glistened in an array of thousands of diamonds before my eyes. I hurried along the roadway. I was just descending the hill when I felt someone walking along in back of me. I turned around and there was my uncle Carl. I was very glad to see him as he would walk home with me. I stopped and waited—he came quite close—I looked in another direction for a moment—then I turned to address him and he had disappeared.

I hastened my steps and found on my arrival at home that a messenger had preceded me with the news of Uncle Carl's death.

I. S. RIGGS.

Winnett, Montana.

Prophetic Dreams

DO you believe in dreams? I don't as a rule but several years ago I had a strange dream that I could not disregard.

Once I left my bed in the middle of the night and walked downstairs in my sleep. I stood on the front porch and while I was there I looked across the lawn and saw a woman beckoning me. She came closer, then she stopped and looking up at me with the saddest expression said:

"Leona, baby, don't be frightened. I am your mother. Prepare for sorrow. This is the beginning of the end."

The apparition disappeared and I woke up to find myself standing on the porch.

The next morning I told my aunt about my dream. She only laughed and told me not to think of it again. My aunt knew me so well she thought my imagination had been playing tricks on me. You see I had been living with her for many years since the death of my mother.

My uncle was very ill at the time and one day the doctor came to me and told me to be sure and notify him if anything should happen before he could return that evening. I couldn't quite understand just why he chose me to tell such bad news. Death to a girl of fifteen is hard to comprehend.

I sat with Uncle while the rest of the family went to dinner. He acted very strangely that I became alarmed and called my aunt and cousin. Before the doctor arrived my uncle passed away. He had tried during the last few moments of his life to say something—something he could not quite get out—

Sometime later I had another dream. This time I dreamed we had gone to the cemetery—my aunt, my cousin, and myself. As we knelt beside his grave I saw my dead uncle standing beside me. He seemed anxious to tell me something.

He said, "I wish I could have told her . . . I wish I could have told her—"

I woke up after that and told my aunt of this dream. She said nothing, but looked at me queerly.

At noon while I was setting the table the doorbell rang. Apropos of nothing, I said:

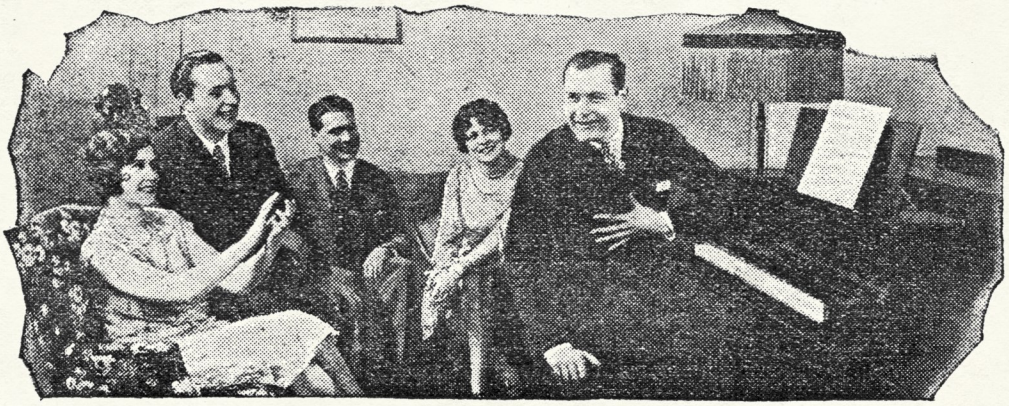
"Here's what Uncle wanted to tell you about."

I answered the bell and the messenger handed me a package from a jeweler with a message that it was a birthday gift ordered by my uncle for his daughter but had not been delivered before because the jeweler thought it better to wait until a little while after the funeral.

My aunt was overcome when she heard it. She immediately recalled my dream and remembered I had said that Uncle wanted to tell her something.

J. C.

"Watch him make a fool of himself"—*I heard someone whisper*



—*then I started to play!*

IT was the first big party of the season and the fun was at its height. The room fairly rocked with laughter as Jim finished his side-splitting imitation of a ballet dancer.

Tom, who was giving the party, turned to me and said, "And now our young friend here will give us his well-known imitation of Paderewski."

Instantly all attention centered upon me. Feigning reluctance, I made as if to beg off, but was forthwith dragged to the piano. Admonitions of "Come on, old timer, do your stuff!"—"Don't be bashful!"—came from all sides.

They expected me to do my usual clowning—but I had a surprise up my sleeve for them. Just as I was about to begin, I heard someone whisper, "Watch him make a fool of himself—why, he can't play a note!"

I Surprised My Friends

They thought I was going to give them my one-finger rendition of chop-sticks. But instead I swung into the opening bars of "The Road to Mandalay"—that rollicking soldier song of Kipling. You should have seen the look of amazement that spread over their faces. This was not the clowning they had expected! Then Tom began to sing. One by one they joined in, until soon they were all crowding around the piano singing away at the top of their lungs.

It was almost an hour before they let me get up from the piano. Then a deluge of questions: "How in the world did you ever do it?"—"Where did you study?"—"When did you learn to play?"—"Who was your teacher?"—"How long have you studied?"

"One at a time, please," I begged. "I'll tell you all about it. To begin with, **I didn't have any teacher.**"

"What! Say, you don't expect us to believe that, do you?"

"Sure thing. But I don't blame you for not believing it. I wouldn't have myself. As you know, I've never been able to play. But I always liked music and many a time when I was pepping up a party with my clowning I would have given anything in the world to be able to sit down at the piano and **really play.**

"But it never occurred to me to take lessons. I thought I was too old—and besides, I couldn't see my way clear towards paying an expensive teacher—to say nothing of the long hours I'd have to put in practicing.

How I Learned to Play

"But one day I noticed an advertisement for the U.S. School of Music. This school offered to teach music by a new and wonderfully simplified method which **didn't require a teacher,** and which averages only a few cents a day. "Well, boys, that certainly sounded good to me, so I filled out the coupon and sent for the Free Demonstration Lesson. When it arrived I found that it seemed even easier than I had hoped.

"I made up my mind to take the course. And believe me that was the luckiest decision of my life! Why, almost before I knew it, I was playing simple tunes! And I studied just whenever I pleased a few minutes a day in my spare time. Now I can play anything I like—ballads, classical numbers, jazz. Listen to this!"

With that I snapped right into a tantalizing jazz number. All evening I was the center of a laughing, singing, hilarious group. And it's been that way at every party I've attended since. * * *

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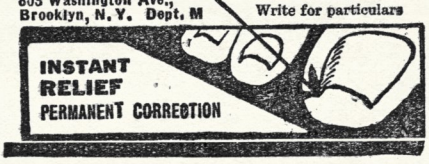

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