The House of Whispers

By WILLIAM JOHNSTON

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"LEFTY MOORE'S WIFE."

Synopsis.—Spalding Nelson receives an invitation to dinner from his great-uncle, Rufus Gaston. On the way he meets Barbara Bradford and renders her a service. She lives in the same apartment building as the Gastons. They go there together. Gaston and his wife are going to Maine for a trip and ask Nelson to live in their apartments. He accepts. The Gastons tell him of mysterious noises about the apartment—"whispers" and noises that have scared them. Going to the apartment a few days later Nelson again meets Barbara, his accidental acquaintance. Nelson meets the building superintendent, Wick, and instinctively dislikes him. In a wall safe he finds a necklace of magnificent pearls. Next day Nelson finds the pearls have disappeared from the wall safe. His first idea of informing the police is not acted upon because of peculiar circumstances. He has been discharged from his position without adequate explanation or reason, and feels himself involved in something of a mystery. He decides to conduct an investigation himself. That night Barbara signals from the window of her apartment, which is opposite his, and they arrange a meeting for next day. In the morning he finds a note in his room, asking him why he had not informed the police of the loss of the jewels. Barbara tells Nelson her sister Claire had some years before made a run-away marriage with an adventurer, from whom she was soon parted, and the marriage had been annulled. Claire is engaged to be married and someone, knowing of her escapade, has stolen documents concerning the affair from the Bradford apartment and is attempting to blackmail the Bradfords. Nelson and Barbara exchange confidences about the "whispers," mysterious notes and other queer doings, which are much alike in both apartments. Nelson encounters more mysteries. He takes Miss Kelly, the telephone girl, to dinner with the idea of pumping her.

CHAPTER VI.

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Left alone for a moment by my companion, I sat there at the table in the crowded restaurant, idly watching the beautifully costumed women all about me, listening dreamily to the music of the orchestra, observing with interest the graceful gyrations of the occasional couple who sought the dancing floor in the center, when suddenly I was brought to myself by hearing a gruff voice saying:

"What'd you bring that crook in here for?"

"What do you mean?" I gasped in astonishment, looking up at a square-shouldered man with a neatly trimmed black mustache who was standing beside my table.

"It's you I mean," he announced. "Don't you know you can't bring that kind of people in here?"

As explanation for my presence there in the White room of the famous Hundredth hotel, let me say that my investigations into the perplexing chain of mysterious circumstances in which Barbara Bradford and I seemed to be each day becoming more firmly involved, had finally led me to deduce three different theories, each more or less plausible, and each involving an entirely different set of persons.

There were certain happenings and circumstances that made me sometimes wonder if the whole thing were not a base plot on the part of my great-uncle Rufus, perhaps influenced by a desire for revenge or perhaps led on by an insane greed for still greater wealth.

Yet, on the other hand, there were those entries in his diary about the mysterious voices. Apparently, too, his wife and Mrs. Burke had heard them.

Did it not seem more likely that the arch plotter was Claire Bradford's ex-husband?

This theory seemed far more tenable. While the Bradfords had heard nothing from him for several years, the publication of Claire Bradford's engagement might have attracted his notice and inspired him to an attempt at blackmail. Yet how could he gain access to the wall safe where the divorce papers were kept, or how could he be dropping notes on the floor of Barbara Bradford's bedroom? How could he have stolen the Gaston pearls? It seemed incredible but still my thoughts kept returning to the possibility of his directing Claire Bradford's actions through hypnotic control. Once he had had influence over her sufficient to make her give up family, friends, home, everything, to marry him. Had he, in some way unknown to Barbara Bradford, regained his control over her sister and was he using her as the unconscious tool for his villainies? She could have gained access to my room by walking along the ledge when all the house was still. Yet this theory explained neither the theft of the pearls, my great-uncle's peculiar actions, my own discharge, nor the mysterious noises in the apartment. I had still a third theory.

Suppose a band of criminals was located in the apartment house on the floor above the Bradfords and me?

Access to either apartment would not be difficult. By short rope ladders they could easily reach either set of rooms. They would be so located that there would be little difficulty for them to devise mysterious sounds for terrifying the people in the apartments below. I recalled that in every case the voices and the footsteps seemed to come from somewhere up near the ceiling. Of course it seemed preposterous that a criminal band would find lodging in a luxurious apartment house like this, yet, why not? Tenants in these buildings knew little about each other and cared less. There was no exchange of neighborly visits. Once having gained access to such a building by forged references, so long as they paid their rent promptly, no one in the building would bother his head about the character of any of the other tenants.

This last theory seemed the most plausible. Besides it was the easiest to work on. It ought not to be difficult to ascertain who lived in the two apartments above. Undoubtedly my best source of information would be Nellie Kelly, the telephone operator. Perhaps, too, she might be able to inform me of my great-uncle's whereabouts. More than likely he had left a forwarding address for his mail with her.

With a letter I had written to my mother, I descended to the main floor and began a conversation with Miss Kelly by asking where was the nearest place that I could buy stamps. As we chatted I began complaining how lonely it was in the apartment and wound up by inviting her to dine with me that evening.

I had anticipated a ready acceptance of my invitation and was amazed to find it firmly refused. In a much confused manner she advanced a dozen reasons, or rather pretexts. She did not go out with the people of the house. Her mother would not like it. She did not know me well enough. Mr. Wick would discharge her if he heard about it.

From an unexpected source, though none the less unwelcome, I found an ally. Mr. Wick himself bobbed up from somewhere, apparently having overheard enough of our conversation to know what it was abut.

"Why, of course, Mr. Nelson," he began in an ingratiating manner that was most repellent to me, "Miss Kelly'll be glad to go to dinner with you. It's part of her business to make things pleasant for the tenants."

It seemed to me that the girl's eyes flashed defiance at him and that she was still inclined to refuse, and I was about to explain resentfully that my invitation was not issued on a business basis, when into Wick's face came an ugly look, something almost threatening.

"Of course Miss Kelly will be glad to go with you," he repeated sharply.

"Certainly," said the girl quickly, before I had a chance to speak, "if Mr. Wick thinks it is all right, I will be glad to go."

Her acceptance did not ring true. I was convinced that it was unwillingly given under some sort of compulsion from the odious Wick.

I met her, at her suggestion, in the parlor of one of the less pretentious hotels. In the hour that had elapsed since she left the apartment, she had exchanged her neat black working suit for more modish clothes. After one quick glance at her transformed appearance my mind was quickly made up as to what sort of a restaurant to take her. It was manifest that she was of the type that would enjoy to the utmost the costly whirl of the fashionable cafe of the moment. It was my purpose to give her such a delightful evening that she would be wishing to spend others in the same way, for I felt certain that she, perhaps better than anyone else, could supply me the information I wanted about the tenants in the building. I was sure it would be well worth my while to win her good graces, cost what it may. Calling a taxi, I bade the chauffeur take us to the "White Room," the very latest fashion in restaurants, where hordes of hectic pursuers of pleasure were wont to assemble to dine and dance. I observed the gleam of satisfaction that came into her eyes as she heard me mention our destination.

At first we talked, in Broadway fashion, of the theaters and restaurants, of the place we were in, of the people at the tables about us, but gradually I led the conversation to Miss Kelly herself and to her work in the apartment.

"It was funny, wasn't it," I said, "about Mr. Wick insisting on your coming with me? I had a notion he didn't like me."

Hitherto my companion had been most vivacious, chatting merrily, flashing back at my sallies with clever bits of that slangy repartee of which most of the metropolitan business girls are such clever mistresses. At my last remark a quick change came over her face. It was as if a mask had been set up between us behind which she was hiding from me.

"I guess he likes you," she answered guardedly. "I never heard him say one way or the other."

"While we're talking about the apartment," I went on, "did my great uncle happen to leave a forwarding address with you? There are some things I want to send him—some pearls they left behind—and he has not written me yet where his address will be."

I had not intended to mention the Gaston pearls. I had slipped that phrase in on the spur of the moment, but little was I prepared for the astounding effect my words had upon her.

"The pearls!" she gasped, turning white. "You're going to send him the Gaston pearls!"

There was a note of amazement, of incredulity in her tone.

"Excuse me," she said, rising unexpectedly, "I gotta telephone."

Before I could gather my wits together she had vanished, leaving me sitting there, staring after her in dismay. What did she—the telephone girl—know about the Gaston pearls? How could she possibly know that they were missing? I had told no one—no one except Barbara Bradford—about the rifled wall safe. How could her excitement and perturbation be accounted for except by the fact that she knew of their loss? I was sitting there, puzzling over her mysterious conduct, when I became aware that a man was standing beside my table, glaring down at me. I looked up, expecting to see the waiter, or head waiter. Instead it was a man in a dinner jacket, a stocky, broad-shouldered chap with a close-cropped gray mustache.

"You're got your nerve," he sneered at me. "Bringing a woman of that sort here."

"A woman of what sort?" I asked eagerly, surprised to find someone in a place of this sort who knew the Granddeck's telephone girl.

"Why, Lefty Moore's wife, of course."

"I don't understand," I replied, "I'm here with Miss Kelly."

"Oh, she told you that was her name, did she?"

"I know it's her name. She's the telephone girl in the apartment where I live—the Granddeck."

I could see his manner toward me change at the mention of my abode, but he was still insistent about the identity of my companion.

"How well do you know her?" he asked.

"Well"—I am afraid I colored, as I realized that my acquaintance with the girl was limited—"I've been living there for a week or so, and I've talked with her two or three times and—"

"I thought so," said my inquisitor. "There's nothing to it. She's Lefty Moore's woman all right. If I'd seen you come in with her, you'd never have got a table in this place."

"What is the matter with her? Who is Lefty Moore?"

An expression of amazement came into the man's face.

"Did you never hear tell of Lefty Moore, the cleverest three-time burglar there is in or out of Sing Sing? Fourteen years he got the last time, and it was quite a write-up the papers gave me for catching him."

It began to dawn on me then who the man was. He must be an ex-policeman employed as the restaurant bouncer or house detective.

"You're sure Miss Kelly and Lefty Moore's wife are the same person?"

"I've reasons for not forgetting her. She was with him that time when I took him. I've got the marks of her

"You've Got Your Nerve," He Sneered at Me.

nails in my face yet. It's her all right, even if she has gone to work as Miss Kelly while Lefty's doing his stretch. She's a bad one, she is."

"Is she a crook, too?" I asked excitedly. I was trying to measure up the importance of this astounding bit of information. Already my deductions had convinced me that some band of criminals was in collusion with someone in the apartment who was carrying out their plots against the Bradfords and me. I had been thinking of an apartment surreptitiously tenanted by a criminal gang. How much more likely that an employee of the place was in the pay of the plotters! And now to learn that the telephone girl was, if not a criminal herself, at least the associate of criminals.

"She's got no record that I know of," the detective admitted, "but she couldn't be Lefty Moore's wife without being a crook herself."

"That helps explain things," I said more to myself than to him.

"Explains what?" he asked suspiciously.

"Look here," I said with a new determination. "There have been some mysterious happenings in the Granddeck, and I brought this girl here to try to pump her. I asked her a question or two, and she became much embarrassed and confused. She jumped up and said she was going to the telephone. Do you suppose that she saw you and recognized you?"

"Not a chance," said the detective.

"Well, I'd like to find out to whom she telephoned. Can you find out for me?"

"Sure I can, but you got to get her out of here."

"All right," I replied. "As soon as she returns to my table, I'll pay my check and we'll leave. I'll be back by and by and see if you've learned anything."

"Here she comes now," said the detective, hastily taking his departure, but I noticed that he had stationed himself behind some palms where he could watch the girl without being seen.

"Who was the fellow talking to you as I came up?" asked Miss Kelly curiously.

She was cool and collected now. Her telephone message—if she had been really phoning—seemed in some way to have fortified her.

"Oh, that fellow," I replied with assumed carelessness, "that was the manager of the place."

"What'd he want?"

"Nothing in particular. He just asked if everything was all right. Why?"

"He looked to me like a bull—like a detective I used to know," she hastily corrected herself.

Her slip in using the thieves' slang phrase served to aid in convincing me that my informant had been correct in his identification. I was as anxious now as the house detective to get her out of the restaurant, and summoning the waiter I hastened to pay my check.

"Let's stay for a couple of dances," she suggested.

"Sorry," I said, "but I can't dance"—mentally adding the words, "with you.'

"Let's go then," she said disappointedly, and to my surprise on the way out she renewed the subject of Mr. Gaston.

"You were asking if the old gentleman left a forwarding address. He didn't leave any with me. If you find out where he is, will you let me or Mr. Wick know? Mr. Wick wants to get in touch with him."

Something told me then it must have been Mr. Wick she had telephoned to. Probably she had informed him I had been asking about the Gastons' address and had consulted him as to what answer to give. Putting the girl into a taxi I paid her driver to take her home and hurried back into the hotel. I found the house detective—James Gorman, I learned his name was—waiting for me in the lobby.

"Was it to the Granddeck she telephoned?" I asked eagerly.

"It was 0909 Plaza. That's a private number. I called up information, and she wouldn't tell me where it was. I'll find out tomorrow, though. There's other ways besides through 'information.'"

"If you find out you'll phone me right away, won't you?" I asked him, giving him my card.

"And have Lefty Moore's wife listening in," he suggested. "Nothing doing, son. You'd better call me from a public pay station."

A night visit from a beautiful ghost.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SCULPTOR FOUND IN ERROR

Stonemason Had to Be Called In to Shave the Bust of John Howard Payne.

"The man who never had a home"—meaning John Howard Payne, of course—also never had a beard.

When the author of "Home, Sweet Home" had died in Tunis and his body was being brought back at the expense of W. W. Corcoran the newspapers broke out all over in a beautiful something about "the man who never had a home and was coming home at last." And when Mr. Corcoran had erected a monument at the poet's grave in Oak Hill, about all Washington attended the dedication ceremonies, either as privileged spectators inside the cemetery or just plain people packed against the railings on the street side—which, generally speaking, folks, is a good place to be, so far as graveyards are concerned—but, anyhow:

The bust of Payne that topped the marble shaft showed a dreamy face bearded like unto the gentleman of western literature usually mentioned as a "pard." And everybody said what a manly man he must have been, but—you know how things get around—after the impressive ceremonies were over—say about two weeks—the town become aware that the late Mr. Payne never wore a beard.

And the next thing that happened: he was shaved by a stonemason.—Washington Star.

Ancient Egyptian Confectionery.

The invention of confectionery, an English writer guesses, is due to Noah, who "first hit on the idea of boiling down the starch of the wheat and the juice of the grape. The result was a paste, said to be the original of our present day 'Turkish delight.' Among the ancient Egyptians whole fruits, particularly figs and dates, were used for flavoring purposes, the latter especially for preserves and cakes. In old tombs date sweetmeats have been found, also records of honey jellies. The making of confectionery, in fact, goes back 3,400 years, proof of which is to be found on the walls of Egyptian tombs."

Word to the Women.

It may not beget undue attention, but 240,162,943 needles were made in the United States last year. It would be pleasant mental recreation for a long evening to figure how many hours of labor, based on the proverb that a stitch in time saves nine, would have been saved the women of the nation if all these needles had been applied at the psychological moment.

First Gun of the Civil War.

On the 9th of January, in 1861, the steamship Star of the West was sent by the federal government from New York with supplies and re-enforcements for Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor. When the Star of the West reached Charleston she was fired upon by Confederate batteries from the town and was obliged to turn back. This was the first actual gunfire of the Civil war.

SILK RIVALS WOOL IN SUMMER SUITS

HOW ATTRACTIVELY outfitted for a summer time promenade is the beautiful girl pictured here! She has arrived at a stunning appearance by employing simple means, and in this case the character of the fabric used is almost altogether responsible for the success of the costume. This is one of many spring suits made of heavy fiber silk, which are vieing with those of wool materials in the spring displays. These silks have a brilliant luster and are woven in many novel patterns employing one or two colors. They have been used heretofore for sports wear, more than for any other, but progress in weaving them has opened a new field of usefulness and they are delighting designers by supplying a new and wonderful medium for street and formal suits.

There is a great variety of weaves in this modern silk, the crepe and ribbed effects predominating, with many new drop-stitch designs. These new weaves inspire designers to further efforts in the invention of styles suited to them. Such brilliant effects in the material make much decoration quite out of the question and this accounts for the simplicity which is so effective in suits and costumes that are made of colorful or lustrous fabrics.

In the suit pictured two tones of color, gray and green, both in rather dark shades, are woven in plain crepe and checkerboard pattern. The plain weave makes the skirt and is used on the coat in collar and girdle. The collar merges into a facing below the waist-line. There is nothing to describe in the suit that may not be gathered from the picture. Its very long, close-fitting sleeves with fascinating frills of lace falling over the hands and the plaited jabot of wide net-top lace, that plays the part of a vest at the front, are details that cannot be spared from this design.

Hat, shoes, stockings and parasol have all been carefully selected for this suit. The hat in light gray and dark green has a spice of black in narrow bands of patent leather, to give it sparkle. Shoes and stockings are gray and green predominates in the parasol where bands of black repeat the black note in the hat.

UNBLEACHED domestic cotton, in the heavy, strong qualities, is among the reliable things that the high cost of living has brought into new uses. A few women have made themselves bungalow aprons and house dresses of it for summer wear and it proves surprisingly attractive with a little simple needlework as its finish. Where it proves most useful is in attire for little folks in dresses and slips or aprons. The natural color makes a fine background for little figures worked in cross-stitch on pockets or belts—bunnies, chickens, birds, kittens and other small friends of the youngsters.

In the matter of price, for several things, the steady upward progress appears to have reached the point where women balk at paying it. They are demanding less expensive millinery for one thing and are determined to do without silk garments unless the prices become stable and less exhorbitant for silk fabrics. In a few cities, leagues have been formed whose members pledge themselves to wear their clothes until they are worn out. Suits and dresses of wool are remodeled and worn with good grace since it is hard to get reliable goods even at the increased prices. Shoes are maintained by journeys to the repair shop—where new half soles and rehabilitated heels, give them a prolonged term of service. These economies are enforced in most cases, but it is a good thing that American women are going through this experience for they have long been accused of being the most extravagant and wasteful of civilized people.

This season there is a good chance to economize in millinery because hats include many shapes that were worn last year, or even in earlier seasons. Sailor shapes, wide brimmed leghorns, some of the "cloche" or drooping brimmed hats as well as toques and turbans of former seasons need only a little alteration to make them entirely up-to-date. The light colors that have become soiled, may be varnished with a darker color, or black, and it is the simplest thing in the world to do this work at home. There are several stains or varnishes on the market, usually for sale in drugstores, that are easy to apply. The vogue for dotted Swiss organdie in facings and trimmings suggests one way of bringing the hats of yester year up-to-date. These materials are used over straw shapes and to make entire hats. Collars and cuffs to match the hat, made of the same Swiss or organdie, add the smartest kind of touch to a street outfit. Of course, every woman has a right to one new hat in the spring, but she is entitled to others if she is clever enough to make them herself and one hat will hardly answer all purposes. Even if it would there is pleasure in a little variety in one's headwear.

Julia Bottomley

Frocks Are Interesting.

Smart modes in dresses are in evidence on all sides, until it is difficult to pick out any one mode for word portrayal, but frocks of tricotine are decidedly interesting when developed with plaited skirts and tailored surplice bodices that wrap about the waist and finish with sash effect, the entire bodice being almost completely covered with Japanese embroidery.

Coat Sleeves.

Coat sleeves are generally three-three-quarter length and the blouses that are worn underneath them are more often than not equipped with sleeves that reach about half way between shoulder and elbow.

Beaded Parasol Here.

The parasol isn't getting left in this vogue of beads. This sun shield in red has a scattering in cut jet beads, in conventional design. A black parasol has a flowered tracery in rose and green shimmery beads.

A Lingerie Convenience.

Those who have had the annoyance of having the lingerie tape slip from the beading of camisole or gown will appreciate this simple hint. When the tape or ribbon is first put through the eyelets or beading, turn under the ends and sew a white pearl button to each end. The button should be large enough, of course, not to slip through the tape.

Net Popular Blouse Material.

Imported blouses are showing net as a material highly favored, particularly when it is combined with lace as trimming. Another feature of the new blouses from Paris is the long sleeves which appear in almost every style. These either come in tightly about the wrist or hang in bell-fashion over the hand.

Will Add Flesh.

Massaging thoroughly the wrists on every side at night with cold cream will in time add flesh.

GET READY FOR "FLU"

Keep Your Liver Active, Your System Purified and Free From Colds by Taking Calotabs, the Nausealess Calomel Tablets, that are Delightful, Safe and Sure.

Physicians and Druggists are advising their friends to keep their systems purified and their organs in perfect working order as a protection against the return of influenza. They know that a clogged up system and a lazy liver favor colds, influenza and serious complications.

To cut short a cold overnight and to prevent serious complications take one Calotab at bedtime with a swallow of water—that's all. No salts, no nausea, no griping, no sickening after effects. Next morning your cold has vanished, your liver is active, your system is purified and refreshed and you are feeling fine with a hearty appetite for breakfast. Eat what you please—no danger.

Calotabs are sold only in original sealed packages, price thirty-five cents. Every druggist is authorized to refund your money if you are not perfectly delighted with Calotabs.—(Adv.)

Charity.

The clergyman of a poor parish was showing a rich lady round, hoping to touch her heart and so receive a big check for his people.

"We are now passing through the poorest slums," he said, as the car turned into a side street. "These people have little to brighten their lives."

"I must do something for them," the lady sighed, adding to the chauffeur:

"James, drive the car slowly and turn on the big lamps."—Tit-Bits.

WOMEN NEED SWAMP-ROOT

Thousands of women have kidney and bladder trouble and never suspect it.

Womens' complaints often prove to be nothing else but kidney trouble, or the result of kidney or bladder disease.

If the kidneys are not in a healthy condition, they may cause the other organs to become diseased.

Pain in the back, headache, loss of ambition, nervousness, are often times symptoms of kidney trouble.

Don't delay starting treatment. Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, a physician's prescription, obtained at any drug store, may be just the remedy needed to overcome such conditions.

Get a medium or large size bottle immediately from any drug store.

However, if you wish first to test this great preparation send ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample bottle. When writing be sure and mention this paper.—Adv.

A Need Omitted.

"I see the treaty of Versailles was taken back to the White House wrapped in brown paper."

"They should have added vinegar in consideration of its wounds."

USES OF ASPIRIN

Bayer Company, who introduced Aspirin 18 years ago, give advice.

Aspirin created a sensation when introduced by Bayer over eighteen years ago. Physicians at once proved its wonderful efficiency in the relief of pain. The genuine, world-famous Aspirin, in "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" is safely taken by millions for Colds, Headache, Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Earache, Toothache, Aching Joints, Neuritis, and Pain generally.

Be sure the "Bayer Cross," which is the mark of true "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin," is on each genuine package and each genuine tablet.

Boxes of 12 tablets cost but a few cents and contain proper directions. Druggists also sell larger "Bayer" packages. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.—Adv.

Relic of Roman Occupation.

Digging in Stepney, London, a workman unearthed a Roman burial urn containing human bones supposed to be nearly two thousand years old.

An egotist is the center of an admiring crowd—and he's the crowd.

When the cat's away the night is always quiet.

VICTIMS RESCUED

Kidney, liver, bladder and uric acid troubles are most dangerous because of their insidious attacks. Heed the first warning they give that they need attention by taking

GOLD MEDAL HAARLEM OIL CAPSULES

The world's standard remedy for these disorders, will often ward off these diseases and strengthen the body against further attacks. Three sizes, all druggists. Look for the name Gold Medal on every box and accept no imitation

Liggett & Myers
KING PIN PLUG TOBACCO
Known as "that good kind"
Try it—and you will know why

FREE FLORIDA FARMS—25c acre monthly gives farm in our HOME COLONY. Your money given back from profit of our SUGAR AND STOCK FARMS. Free booklet. IDEAL AMERICAN CORPORATION, Johnston, Fla. Short Time Special Offer Dept. A.