The Mystery of Hartley House

By CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND

Illustrated by IRWIN MYERS

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MYSTERY!

A fine old isolated country place, with a murder story, a haunted pool and a general atmosphere of the unusual; a rich old American owner, with a Spanish wife and a beautiful daughter; a young resident physician secretly in love with the girl—that's material enough for a first-class mystery story. But when the mother asks her daughter and the doctor to become "nominally engaged"—to discourage the advances of the family butler—why, you get a hint of the unusual qualities of this story of mystery.

CHAPTER I.

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Rain had been falling for five days when I first saw Hartley house. The place had so much local distinction that a village not far from the estate was named Hartley, for it.

Even when drenched and dripping in a storm which had lasted for five days in late May, the spot was beautiful and charming; it had antiquity, that rare thing in a new land. Its two thousand acres, handsomely arranged for decorative and agricultural purposes, lay along the river bank, with an incented and interesting littoral where the river was two miles wide.

I had been an interne in St. Julian's hospital, and at the close of my last year Dr. Brownell had asked me if my arrangements would make it possible for me to undertake a case which he thought might be profitable and interesting to a young physician. It was that of Mr. Homer Sidney, the owner of Hartley house.

"I never saw so strange a will to live," said the doctor when he discussed the circumstances with me. "The old man is indomitable. For that reason he is interesting. He lives because he wills to live, for some tremendous reason of which I know nothing. It is enormous. You may live to see him die; I am afraid I shall not—and he is seventy and I am fifty."

I decided to accept. It may have been professional weakness, but in addition to the financial certainty offered there was a professional interest aroused. If Dr. Brownell were attracted by a human being's will to live there certainly was something supernumanly interesting about that human being.

The recollection of Hartley as I first saw it remains as an enduring impression. The long downpour of rain had given the place a spiritual accent. One felt as if the soul were saturated.

It is only occasionally in a normal mind that weather works a spiritual effect. I thought my mind was normal, but I felt the spiritual depression.

The way from the station for three miles was through ordinary American small farm land. Then it changed abruptly. Antiquity began to show. The driver said we were in the Hartley grounds.

I was so depressed by the rain, by my own uncertainty, by thinking over the decision I had made and seemed about to regret, by the dismal prospects—or at least the uncertain prospects—that I should have been glad for any sustaining human association. At the end of my journey I soon found such association and was thereafter happy in it, but approaching the place I was apprehensive. My driver had been, if not unapproachable, at least stupid and dismal.

It somewhat astonished me when suddenly he began to talk. We were then about a half mile from the house.

"I wish you had come an hour earlier," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"I'm not a coward," said the driver, "—at least, no more than usual, but I don't like to be in here alone, and I've got to go home alone."

In a fashion he expressed what might have been my mood if I had known more of the place. I could sympathize with him. The rain had done this for me.

"What have you to be afraid of?" I asked. "Is something haunted around here?" It seemed as if so beautiful a spot ought to have this interest. He stopped his horse.

"I'm going back out of here like a scared pig," he said, "—that is, if the old horse can stand it. But you're going to live here for a while, and I'll stop a minute to show you where they say the ghost walks."

He pointed to where the river had eaten a substantial bit out of the bank, making a pool or tiny bay. The road, swerving toward the river here, was within thirty feet of it.

"It isn't natural for a man to kill his brother," said my driver, "and something unnatural comes of it. A man killed his brother there, and something unnatural has come of it. That's why I'll be just as well satisfied to get you to the house and myself back out of here before dark."

"Get along, then," I said. "It looks like an ordinary place to me."

"To me too," said my driver. "And I don't want it ever to look extraordinary."

"Who was killed there?" I asked.

"You'll learn the story soon enough," said the driver, "if you're going to stay in this house. You'll learn it better than I can tell you."

At the great coach entrance of the old house I paid the driver and let him go. He was anxious to be gone. It was growing dark. Then I began ringing the bell.

At the third ringing there was a response, in the form of a servant, a man, butler or doorman, past middle age. He was crusty.

"What do you want?" he asked.

I explained that I was Dr. Michelson and wanted nothing that I was not wanted for. I did not like his manner and was not inclined to ignore it or to propitiate him as ordinarily one would. He had, at first sight, an extraordinary power of exasperation. At the time I did not understand my weakness, but afterward I did. The man was abnormal as an irritant.

Thus my appearance at Hartley house was so unfortunate that if the servant's contumacy and my resentment had had another moment, the door would have been slammed in my face and I should have been walking back to Hartley station. At that hesitant moment in my fortunes, a woman's voice intervened.

"Jed," it said, "who's there?"

The servant opened the door wider, and I saw a lady, a South American, I thought.

"I am Dr. Michelson," I said.

"Yes, doctor," she replied, "we have been expecting you. I am Mrs. Sidney. Where is your baggage?"

"I have only a handbag with me here," I said.

"Come in," she said, "Jed will take it."

He did, but made me see the ill nature of his reception of me and of his duty. He had also, at the direction of Mrs. Sidney, to show me to my quarters.

"Jed," I said, in my room, "we have not made the best start for two people who may have to live together for some time."

I offered him a dollar as a peace offering.

"Are you going to stay here?" he asked.

"I am supposed to," I said.

"A dollar won't make you welcome," he said, and left me looking at the coin in my hand.

I was called to dinner and had it alone in a large dining room. When I had finished a maid told me that Mr. Sidney would be glad to see me if it were convenient for me—that he did not need me professionally, but that socially he would be delighted if I could come to him.

He was sitting in a large arm chair in a great room with a great fireplace. Later I perceived the fascinating details of the room, but just then Mr. Sidney had all my attention.

Dr. Brownell had told me of the remarkable will to live which I should find. It was instantly apparent. The

"A Dollar Won't Make You Welcome," He Said, and Left Me Looking at the Coin in My Hand.

old man was wonderfully alive. He was abrupt but smilingly and charmingly courteous. We talked for a quarter of an hour, casually. Then he said:

"I know you are tired, doctor."

"Not at all," I said, interested to see more of him if I might.

"That's your good nature," he said. "And we certainly do not want to wear you out in one day. We only wanted to see you. We shall get better acquainted, and we hope you'll like us and be comfortable and happy here. We have a fashion of trying to be happy. We are going to say good night and allow you to settle yourself to new surroundings in privacy. It is the kindest thing we can do. Jed will show you to your room. Jed, take care of Dr. Michelson. Good night, doctor."

Mrs. Sidney stood beside Mr. Sidney as he was speaking. I had thought at first seeing her that she had been very beautiful and that now she was very unhappy. Seeing her again, I retained my first impressions.

Jed preceded me through corridors to my door and left me surlily. As he closed the door I thought I heard another sound than that of the clicking of the latch. I had. It was the throwing of a bolt on the outside: Jed had locked me in. I made sure of this by trying the door. It could not be opened. Here was an astonishing situation for a first night in a place. My impulse was to make a noise and ask for an explanation, but on second thought I did not. My room was on the second floor, and I saw, looking out of the window, that it would not be impossible to make a descent on the outside in an emergency. I decided not to begin my stay with a protest against any habits of the house or occurrences in it. In the night I was awakened out of a sound sleep with an idea that I had been disturbed by noises, but nothing I could hear sustained it, and I went to sleep again.

I was up early, dressed and found that my door had been unbolted. I examined the outside of it for a bolt and had difficulty in finding one, so ingeniously had it been concealed. The knob seemed a part of the decoration of the panel, and the bolt was of thin steel. I found it only by finding the socket into which it could be shot.

The rain had stopped, and although the woods were dripping, there was a glorious, radiant sunlight. The effect was exhilarating. It worked a spiritual change. Man, said the morning, was made to be happy.

Exulting in pleasant emotions, I let myself out of the main door and rejoiced in the beauty of the place and the moment. I took a short walk across the lawn toward the woods. A gardener asked me if I were the new doctor and said if I had leisure during the day he wished I would come to the cottage beyond the gardens. His infant had a cough.

The house was astir when I reentered. Jed was the first person I saw, and to my astonishment he was not only civil but pleasant and candid.

"Did you have a fair night, doctor?" he asked. "Sometimes a first night in a new place is disturbed, and I owe you apologies. We have had here occasion at times for locking doors on the outside as well as on the inside, and last night I forgot myself and threw the bolt of your door. I am occasionally in liquor, and last night I had a touch too much."

I smiled at his candor and said something jokingly in comment.

"A servant can't be blamed, doctor, for that," he said, "if his master leads him into it. We have coffee before breakfast. I'll serve you anywhere. The morning papers are in the library. There's a porch off it with a good view. It's my favorite spot of a morning. I recommend that you have your coffee there."

His friendliness was amusing, but I found his suggestion good, and being fond of coffee, enjoyed it with a half hour of magnificent view and a cigarette. The morning was odorous after the rain.

The house was a charming structural disorder of L's and wings, porches and balconies. It was very old, and one could see where different generations had contributed to its growth. The walls were backgrounds for hollyhocks or support for climbing roses or ivy. It had plenty of sunlight, but dense white oak woods came close up.

I held myself in readiness to attend my patient at his convenience, but it was ten o'clock before I was summoned. Mr. Sidney was pleasant and animated.

"We must arrive at a schedule," I suggested. "This is a little too late in the day to satisfy Dr. Brownell's ideas of what my duties are."

"But, my dear doctor," he said, "I do not wake until nine. I need my sleep. I do not go to sleep until one."

"I should advise early hours," I said.

"Of course you would, but you must remember that you are dealing with a man, at the end of his life, trying to make the most of it. I like to remain awake late."

"Then you must," I said. "I shall consider it settled to see you at ten."

"And, I hope, sometimes to sit up with me until one. Do you like chess?"

"I never played."

"Luckily, Jed does, just well enough to interest me and have me beat him. Do you like wine?"

"A young doctor does not drink."

"Luckily, Jed does. It is a great satisfaction to have some one whom you can beat at chess and whom you can see enjoying wine. Doctor, I have yielded to my friend Brownell's demand for constant attention, but as you can see, there will not be a great deal for a physician to do. I eat well, I sleep well, and so long as my sensations are pleasant, I want to live. They are not always pleasant, but mostly they are so. I'd like to have you as a new friend in the house. I like to be talked to. I like to be read to. Will you relax and be just a friend?"

"With pleasure," I said, "so long as nothing interferes with the physician."

"That's a bargain," he said. "At three o'clock this afternoon you shall read to me."

During my spare time I walked about the grounds. A part of the estate, about thirty acres, which seemed to be architecturally intimate and related to the house, was completely inclosed by a twelve-foot brick wall surmounted by sharp spikes. It was built beyond the river's edge, and was continued out into the water in a heavily buttressed fashion. Only a good swimmer could have rounded it and come into the place. It looked like a carefully but strangely designed protection.

In the dog kennels were mastiffs and a number of Airedales. I said to Jed that it seemed as if precautions had been taken against a perceived danger. He had been affable during the day, but his face clouded instantly.

"The wall was here when Mr. Sidney bought the place, but we are in a way isolated," he said shortly. "It is reasonable to take precautions. It will be a precaution for you not to go roaming the grounds at night. The dogs are not friendly then."

His surliness was easily passed over. I was good humored and wished to prove it.

"I have heard of the haunted bay," I said. "What is its story?"

"Every fool in and about the place talks of that," he said. "You'll get too much of the story only too soon. But that isn't why we have the dogs. We don't take any stock in ghosts in this house."

He was offended and went away. At three o'clock I saw my patient again, and he wanted me to read to him.

I read to him for an hour. Then he took a nap.

I had been told that any time I wanted to go to town I might tell one of the chauffeurs to take me. I needed a thin file for the bolt on my door. It annoyed me. I did not ask that whoever threw it at night should know that it was gone. It suited my purposes better that it should be gone and the person who used it should think it was still there. Therefore, after reading to Mr. Sidney I went to town for a thin file.

I got my file, and for greater sociability on the return trip I took the seat beside Charles, the driver.

As we passed the pool, Charles referred to it.

"What is it?" I asked. "What's the story?"

"A man killed his brother there," said Charles. "He is now in the penitentiary at Alwick for life. His brother's ghost, they say, comes back. I've never seen it, but some people say they have."

"Who were the brothers?" I asked.

"They were the sons of the people who used to own this place—the Dobsons." He did not say anything more of it and I did not question him.

I used the file on my bolt, leaving one end of it in the socket. It could be thrown, but it could not bar the door.

Love at first sight.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HUNTING THE SPERM WHALE

One Taken Off West Coast of Scotland Realized Five Thousand Dollars for Its Captors.

A graphic account of the hunting and killing of a sperm whale is told by one who took part in it. Starting from the west coast of Scotland the whaler made for Rockall, a lonely granite pinnacle that juts out of the Atlantic about two hundred miles west of the Outer Hebrides. Why the whales go there is a mystery, but in early summer schools of them may be found in the neighborhood. The lookout soon spies a "blow," that is the fountain ejected by the whale as it comes to the surface to breathe. Away goes the whaler in pursuit. After some tense maneuvering the whaler gets into suitable position, the skipper takes aim, fires his harpoon gun and a harpoon is embedded in the monster's body. The whale disappears taking yards of hemp line with him. Presently he rises to blow again, and immediately a second harpoon is fired at him and he goes down with yards of cable rattling overboard. About fifty minutes later he floats on the surface of the water, quite dead.

Immediately the sailors fall upon him. Air is pumped into the carcass to make it buoyant, his flukes are trimmed off, so that he will float in tow, and the whaler makes for Scotland again, with a host of screaming birds in her rear. This particular whale realized five thousand dollars. It was a full-grown sperm, about sixty feet long.

Happiness in Gladness.

"Be glad! When you have said all there is to say about life's sorrow, disappointment and pain, about the selfishness and wrong that sweep over the earth like shadows, about the shortness of its days and the certainty of its nights, it still remains blessedly true that the universe is thrilling with the song of gladness," says a helpful writer.

"Be glad for the beauty of the springtime, the blue of the skies, the music of the birds and the glory of the sunsets. Listen to the laughter of the little children, answer to the handclasp of friendship, grow warm in the lovelight of countless happy homes and be sure that somewhere over and above all is a great Love that makes all these things possible."

The secret of happiness lies in your own attitude toward life.—Orison Swett Marden in Chicago Daily News.

Indians Still Use Blow Gun.

The blow gun is still popular for hunting birds among the Koasati Indians in Louisiana. This weapon consists of a tube, usually of cane, about six feet long, rubbed smooth on the inside with an implement made for the purpose and carefully straightened with the aid of fire. Slender pointed darts about eight inches long are used as ammunition, each one wrapped neatly along a third of its length with thistledown or cotton to make it fit the inside of the tube. The hunter places a dart in the tube, which he raises to his lips and with which he takes careful aim at his game; then with a quick puff of breath he drives the little dart flying with a sufficient force to impale and kill a small bird or squirrel.

One Millionth of an Inch.

Steel gauges accurate to the incredible fineness of a millionth part of an inch are now being made in quantities at the United States bureau of standards. So extraordinarily precise is the method of manufacture, simple as it is, that in one instance 32 finished gauges out of a lot of 33 were absolutely accurate to .000,001 inch, and the balance all within .000,002 inch of precision, says Popular Mechanics Magazine. The guages are steel discs.

Sickening Discovery.

The teacher had read a chapter from "The History of the American Revolution" and Raymond had then heard the word "breastworks" for the first time. Telling his mother the story when he got home, he said: "When the British got up in the morning and saw the Americans on the opposite side of the hill, they threw up their breakfasts."—Boston Transcript.

STYLES PROGRESS IN UNDERTHINGS

GENTLE women have always appreciated all the little subtle touches that are the essentials of good dressing. In days gone by our grandmothers learned the art of embroidery and occupied many hours of their time doing painstaking and beautiful work on their belongings. They replenished their store of undermuslins with dainty hand-made pieces, adding refinements to them in embroidery and other stitching. Underwear of fine cottons, decorated with exquisite embroideries, is as much admired as ever, but most of it is made in other lands than ours.

Meantime styles in underthings progress. They have not grown any less dainty but they have become more luxurious. Wash silks and satins, laces and even chiffons have been added to the materials used for making them and ribbons have replaced embroidery. The camisole petticoat and boudoir mantle pictured here reflect the mode in luxurious and beautiful underthings of silk which has eclipsed cotton in the favor of many fair women.

If it were not for embellishments of ribbon our underwear of today would be uninteresting and tame. No matter whether of silk or cotton it is all designed with reference to ribbon decorations and no manufacturer could hope for any success who failed to reckon with ribbon. Lingerie bows, flower forms and ornaments that are detachable are taken as a matter of course in the wardrobe of today.

The petticoat pictured is made of white wash satin and finished at the bottom edge with a border of lace. Deep scalloped pieces with bound edges are set on instead of a flounce and headed with a band of lace insertion. Small flowerlike rosettes made of narrow pink ribbon are set at the top and bottom of the scallop. The camisole is made of a filmy lace with narrow satin ribbon simulating flowers applied to it. The same ribbon supplies the shoulder straps and makes the little blossoms set on where they join the body. Wider ribbon with a picot edge takes care of the adjustment at the waist and supplies a pretty bow and ends for a finish. By such means the much-occupied women of today contrive to have those delicate underthings that are essential to perfect dress.

INDOOR DRESS NOW GOES TROUSERWARD

NEGLIGEES patterned after the garb of Chinese women are developing popularity at a rate that promises to make them rivals of the kimono. They prove to be comfortable, practical and unexpectedly becoming—especially to small women. Other skirtless models reveal a trouser-ward trend in boudoir clothes, as is apparent in any representative display of such garments. Turkish trousers of satin or even of silk and metal tissues, over low bodices, form the foundation for long, loose coats of crepe georgette or chiffon, in the showiest and most splendid examples of negligees; so there is plenty of precedent for the Chinese garments of much less magnificence, although nearly all of these are fashioned in silk or satin which is more than fine enough.

An excellent example of indoor dress of Chinese inspiration is shown in the figure at the left of the two pictured above. It is of plain, deep blue satin bordered with brocaded satin in which palm leaves and irregular dashes of color appear with green, henna and blue figuring in the composition. Nothing could be much easier to put together than this cheerful negligee.

At the right, crepe de chine and georgette make an equally simple indoor dress having a straight chemise slip of the heavier material and an over garment of lace and georgette, with square neck that allows it to slip over the head. A ribbon girdle and small spray of ribbon flowers acquit themselves perfectly as finishing touches. A bandeau of ribbons on the head is substituted for a boudoir cap and proves an advantage in the direction of dignity.

Very pretty negligees of lightweight brocaded satins and in novelty crepe de chine are among the last addition to indoor clothes. They are usually cut like long, loose and slightly draped coats with long shawl collars that are a froth of lace frills and organdie. Bandeaux of frills and ribbon, with tiny chiffon roses for trimming, correspond with the collar and complete the daintiest and most easily put on of negligees, as they fasten with a single ornament (of chiffon roses) below the waistline. They look much like an opera cape in outline.

Julia Bottomley

Fastens in Center Back.

The blouse that fastens in the center back is the favorite of the moment. Many of these blouses are finished at the neck in front with old-fashioned frills, either gathered or accordion plaited, of white net, or organdie when the blouse proper is shown in color, or vice versa.

A Plain Petticoat.

The straight petticoat composed of two widths of material turned over at the top to allow of an elastic band one inch wide being inserted is a thing which even the most inexperienced sewer can make. Fasten the elastic with a non-rusting hook and eye. If you make the petticoat of washing material, take out the elastic when it goes to the laundry, as it perishes in water. The petticoat should not be more than one yard and three-quarters round the hem.

Full Tulle Overskirts.

Full tulle overskirts are pretty features of the newest evening dresses.

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

By Mary Graham Bonner

THE ROBIN PARENTS.

"Over a little balcony," said Daddy, "where a lady used to sit and sew, there were several roofs adjoining and going off from different sides of the balcony, and there were eaves running along the balcony.

"She's Looking at Us."

"The balcony was on the second floor of the house and it faced the south, where all morning long the sun would come and shine and keep it very warm there, for the lady used to love the warmth above everything.

"There she would sew, as I said before, for she was a very wonderful person to sew, and she could make patches that didn't look like patches and darns that looked like embroidery, so beautifully were they done.

"In the spring a Mr. and Mrs. Robin looked about them for their home. 'How about this?' asked Mr. Robin. He was pointing to the eaves right over the little balcony.

"'There is some one there,' said Mrs. Robin, 'but she looks very nice and as though she wouldn't hurt a little bird for anything. I think it is perfectly safe. See, she is looking at us and her voice is low, and she is not frightening us. She is speaking to us; listen to what she says.' And they listened and heard the lady say: 'Dear little robins, have you come to call on me?'

"'Ah, her voice is so sweet and so nice, and she really seems to be glad to see us. Let us build our nest here.'

"'I think it would be a good idea,' said Mr. Robin.

"So they built their nest under the eaves, right over the balcony where all day the lady sat, most of the time sewing, some of the time reading.

"She would have visitors there, too, and sometimes she would tell them of the robins who were so nearby, but she always saw that no one frightened the robins, and that they were well looked after.

"She used to put breadcrumbs on the roof near the eaves. And a little pan of water was always there, too, for bathing or for drinking!

"Mr. and Mrs. Robin built a lovely big nest, and there Mrs. Robin laid the eggs. After a little while the baby robins came, poor little timid creatures, with scarcely any feathers at all.

"But Mr. and Mrs. Robin loved them and thought they were beautiful, just as boys and girls think their little baby brothers and sisters are beautiful, even if they have no hair on their heads—in fact, they like them that way, for then they look so appealing and so cunning and so helpless and yet so glad to be in the world.

"And the robins fed their babies and brought them delicious worms, and gave them drops of water, and all the time they looked down upon the lady as she sewed or read, and they said:

"'We do not only guard over our nest and over our babies, but the lady there is seeing that no harm comes to us. See how she watches us and how she seems to care for us! She, too, is a guardian of the precious little nest.'

"And after a time the baby robins began to try their little wings, and the lady watched and rejoiced, too, as the mother and father robin rejoiced to see the little dears really take to flying quite easily.

"Back and forth, countless times each day, the mother and father flew with goodies for the young, or when one was gone the other sat on the edge of the nest or in the nest, with its head peeping out above, seeing that all was well and safe.

"Usually Mother Robin guarded the nest, while Father Robin went off for food, for he was a very fine robin to go to market and pick out all the best things.

Thought They Were Beautiful.

"He knew the best places in the lawn where he could find worms. He was really a very remarkable robin about getting the very best of everything without any trouble. He just knew so much about it all and was such a good business robin that he was a very fine provider.

"And, too, he knew that by helping Mrs. Robin he was sharing in everything, and unless he shared doing what was to be done, it was not only fair to Mrs. Robin, who would get all tired out alone, but it was also much more fun to help one's mate.

"So the little robins grew up happily and safely in their nest by the little balcony."

Laugh Was Limited.

"What are you laughing at, dear?" asked a fond mother of a little four-year-old miss who seemed to be greatly amused.

"Oh, at something funny that happened," was the reply, "but it's no use to tell you, because it isn't funny enough for both of us to laugh at."

Not There Long Enough.

Teacher—Do you know the population of Chicago?

"Not all of them, ma'am, but then we've only lived here two years."