The Mystery of Hartley House

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Illustrated by IRWIN MYERS

ISOBEL!

Synopsis.—Dr. John Michelson, just beginning his career, becomes resident physician and companion of Homer Sidney at Hartley house. Mr. Sidney is an American, a semi-invalid, old and rich and very desirous to live. Mrs. Sidney is a Spanish woman, dignified and reticent. Jed, the butler, acts like a privileged member of the family. Hartley house is a fine old isolated country place, with a murder story, a "haunted pool," and many watch-dogs, and an atmosphere of mystery. The "haunted pool" is where Richard Dobson, son of a former owner of Hartley house, had killed his brother, Arthur Dobson. Jed begins operations by locking the doctor in his room the very first night.

CHAPTER II.

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That evening I had dinner with Mrs. Sidney and her daughter Isobel. I had been in the house twenty-four hours and did not know there was a daughter until dinner brought the three of us together.

Mrs. Sidney was Spanish. She was a lovely woman, gracious and charming, but I thought there was a great deal of steel hidden in her disposition. She did not seem to ask that life be soft or to expect to find it so. She had a Roman dignity of self respect which did not, I could be sure, permit moaning. It would not have taxed any one's perceptions to recognize in Mrs. Sidney a human being living an extraordinary life. The fact was so apparent that it seemed a part of her personality.

It must be remembered that I had come to Hartley house prepared for abnormalities. There was first, the man with the wonderful will to live which had interested Dr. Brownell. There was the alien beauty of the house, the strange servant Jed, the haunted pool—insignificant as it was, to a rational being—the lovely woman who was so apparently a tragic figure. There was the fact of my being locked in my room the first night. There were the forbidding defences of the place—walls, dogs and keepers. I may be excused for taking a fanciful view of my new surroundings.

Then there was Miss Sidney—Isobel. She came into the dining room an unexpected if not astonishing phenomenon to me, who did not know that there was a daughter in the family.

Mrs. Sidney presented me.

"How do you do?" said Miss Sidney, and she seemed to find it tiresome that a stranger had taken a place at the table.

Jed served us, and the dinner was excellent. Although the ladies had only a glass of sherry each, I was offered a variety of liquors. My habit is abstemious except upon rare occasions, but I was so embarrassed by Miss Sidney's boredom that I took two glasses of champagne, and they made me a more tolerable dinner companion. It was some champagne stimulated remark on feminism which caused Miss Sidney to stare at me as if I were an animal which, being smooth skinned, suddenly had grown a coat of fur.

She stared for an instant and then laughed. She was quite frank. She had been bored; she had become interested. I could see that she distressed her mother. Mrs. Sidney, any one could know, held to conventions as the salvation of life; Miss Sidney did not.

Isobel Sidney was a very attractive girl. I guessed her age to be twenty-three. I also guessed that candor and honesty were outstanding points in her disposition. Her youth and her beauty were magnetic, and I must confess that my romanticism was touched instantly. I had seen just enough of Mr. Sidney to understand how this girl could be the daughter of Mrs. Sidney.

By the time dinner was over we had found a pleasant agreement in ideas and taste. I was in an ecstacy, full of the sensation which comes to a diffident man, unaccustomed to women, when he dares to think for the first

She Seemed to Find It Tiresome That a Stranger Had Taken a Place at the Table.

time that he has been interesting to a young and beautiful girl. It is one of the Elysian emotions. We grow old and bald, and women are adventures dismissed from our lives. We know we do not interest them. We do not think of interesting them. We become pantalooned lay-figures too scared of scandal or too confirmed in propriety to break out of the narrowed way. There is an age which comes to a man, a condition in which he finds himself, to which he submits if he have any morals, and when it comes and when he submits, the gates are closed upon fanciful, romantic adventures. If he has been fortunate, he is content. He sits at the west window, and his prospect is the sunset. He no longer asks the great question of youth: "Could I make that girl like me?"

To me, after that first dinner with Mrs. Sidney and her daughter, the ecstacy was a romantic folly. Isobel had captured me, my sense, my rationality, my judgment, my mind, fancy and emotions. Beauty and youth alone are enough to do this for an imaginative young man, and when attractive aspects of character are back of beauty and youth, and when the young man looks forward to a probability of that conquering circumstance, propinquity, he may be excused if his feet lightly touch the floor. I was captured and knew it after that first dinner—knew it, and both loved and dreaded it. I was about to make a fool of myself and be at once a happy and a miserable fool.

In the exalted state of egoistic emotions which I have outlined, I went to Mr. Sidney's room after dinner and sat with him for two hours. I began to appreciate how charmingly his life was decorated. A really rare subtlety of art was used to bring a warm color into this indomitable but feeble man's winter of life. I did not fully appreciate until later what thought and care lay behind the unstudied comforts and sensations Hartley house offered.

Mr. Sidney was white haired and very gracious. His manner was a warm cordiality. It was not precise. It was robust, but it was benignant. Later I saw how his presence pervaded the place.

We had a cheerful talk. What he said suggested to me that my world could not have been more than a hundred years old at the most, and that his included the period of inorganic evolution in which the period of organic evolution is but a pin prick. Youth is startled by such conceptions of life, but I had an interesting evening.

Before I said good night, Jed came in with two bottles of wine. He stood and looked at me unpleasantly. I arose to go, and Mr. Sidney said:

"I think we shall like each other. At least, I hope you will be comfortable, even happy. And don't be distressed about the wine. I don't drink it any more. Jed drinks it, and I enjoy seeing him do it."

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A whippoorwill was reiterant in the woods at night, and its call came from dark recesses odorous and mysteriously veiled. Having said good night to Mr. Sidney, I had gone to my room with a book from the library. The night was fresh, sweet-smelling and cool. I had read for several hours when I heard the cut bolt in my door thrown against the piece of metal which had been left in the socket.

There was no transom above the door, and evidently the threshold kept light from appearing beneath it. I had been reading, as I said, for three hours at least, and whoever tried to bolt me in had good reason to think I was asleep.

I knew who the person was. It was Jed. Knowing I was not locked in, I was undisturbed and continued reading.

Shortly afterward I heard a woman's voice in expostulation far down the hall. It arose abruptly to a sharp cry, and I had to lay aside my book and expose the fact that my door was not locked, a thing I had not wanted to do until the secret of its being locked could be discovered by revealing that it was not.

I hurried out and down the hall. Jed had a woman by the wrist. Both of them saw me coming. She released herself from his relaxing grip by a quick jerk and ran. He stood until I came up.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"What makes you think anything is the matter?" he asked.

"Don't take me for a fool," I said. "That was Mrs. Sidney who screamed. You were holding her. It seems to me it needs an explanation."

"Who are you that you need an explanation?" said Jed.

"You are drunk again."

"I know I am. If that's satisfactory to my employer, why should it bother you?"

"I doubt that it is satisfactory to your employer that you should be making his wife scream at midnight. Look here: you're a servant in this house. What have you to say for yourself? I'm going to have an explanation of this."

Jed had been surly and angry, but now he grinned.

"All right," he said, "but if you want to be decent about it, ask Mrs. Sidney first whether she wants your help and your asking. That's my advice, young fellow. And while we're asking, how did you get out of your room? You're not supposed to be out. We don't want people in this house running around the halls at this time of night."

"I opened the door and came out. Why shouldn't I come out. I heard a scream and came."

He looked at me as if he were doubting himself. I think he was uncertain whether he had thrown the bolt or not. It transpired later that I was right, but for the time I was worried.

When I went back to my room, I was restless, as one naturally would be, a stranger in so strange a house. It was impossible to sleep and difficult to read. I sat by the window and alternately dozed and read until day broke and the woodthrush began to sing. Then, quieted, I went to bed and had two hours' sleep.

I thought it wise to speak to Mrs. Sidney about the incident of the night. She had seen me, she knew I had talked to Jed, she might or might not know that I recognized her. I might add to her perplexities by speaking to her, but I might obtain an insight into matters which would enable me to act discreetly and usefully. If I remained ignorant of motives prevailing in the house, I might at any time blunder into a serious mistake. It seemed best to speak to Mrs. Sidney.

I could see when I spoke to her, she had been greatly disturbed, but she was Roman.

"It was nothing serious or important, doctor," she said. "I'll not say that it was pleasant or that I liked it, but it had no significance. Jed is a faithful and invaluable servant. He has a vice for which he is not responsible. He was a perfectly sober man when he came to us, and if he isn't now, it is our own fault. My husband corrupted him without intending to do so. My husband, when he was well and strong, loved to drink wine. He drank it in great quantities and without any disturbance of his sobriety or good nature. It mellowed and at the time intensified life for him. He cannot use it now, on account of his health, but he enjoys seeing the use of it, and

She Had Been Greatly Disturbed, but She Was Roman.

Jed has been made the victim of Mr. Sidney's vicarious enjoyment. Jed is not always considerate of his position when he is not sober, but he never is dangerous, not even when, like last night, he is exceedingly annoying."

I admired the lady's resolution and fortitude, but I did not think she was telling the truth—not all of it.

"That was the first time anything of the kind ever occurred," she said. "I am sorry it disturbed you. I met Jed in the hall. He was not sober, and he had a preposterous request to make. When he has spent such an evening with Mr. Sidney, he resents being a servant in the family. He wants to be accepted as a member of the family."

"I have had something to do with that," I suggested.

"No doubt it has inflamed his egotism to have you enter the family. The situation with him is difficult. His pride was hurting him last night. He had lost all sense of proportion. He was like a child. He remonstrated with me: he was too important as Mr. Sidney's crony to be merely our servant! It was only a drunken mood, but he forgot himself and grasped me by the wrist. I had been trying to control him and restore his common sense. Then I became indignant, and you heard my voice. I am afraid it was shrill, but I was not alarmed. I was merely indignant."

"You speak of Jed, Mrs. Sidney," I said, "as if he were merely an annoying alcoholic, tolerated when he is annoying, because of his general usefulness but that does not explain why he tries to lock me in my room while he is sober and before these disturbances begin. That shows design and intent to have a free hand when he makes the disturbance. I do not like being locked in my room."

"It is outrageous," said the lady nervously. "I did not know that it was done. I shall see that it is not repeated."

"I am not so sure you can," I said, "and I wish you would not try. I have protected myself against it, and I'd rather Jed did not give me any more thought than he thinks is necessary now."

"I am sure, doctor," said Mrs. Sidney, "that you will understand Jed and the situation better when you have been here longer. It may be annoying to you now, but we all here live for the pleasure and comfort of Mr. Sidney, who is worthy of all we can do for him. He did everything he could for us while he was active, and if thoughts would benefit us, he would be working for us now."

Mrs. Sidney was determined to protect the secret of the situation, and I had no right to cross examine her. The next time I went to town I bought myself a forty-five caliber pistol.

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Although I was prepared for recurrent disturbances, there were none. Within a week I had found my way into a pleasant routine. Jed seemed to be conscious that he had overstepped his bounds. He was not apparently contrite, but he was cautious.

A week was without incident. Then Miss Sidney went away to make a visit. Her absence was a spiritual disaster. Ecstatic and morose youth! The beauty of Hartley house became a hollow and dark melancholy, making sad sounds. Vibrant life had gone from it. Its perfume was lost.

I cannot now tell quite what it was that made Hartley house, a place so comfortable and genial, at the same time a place so threatened. The threat could not be ignored: it was there. The story of the ghost at the haunted pool could have nothing to do with it. The threat had tangible aspects. Mrs. Sidney's worry, unspoken but graven in her resolutely Roman face, was one evidence. The extraordinary behavior of Jed was another. The atmosphere of the place was one of mystery.

During the pleasant, peaceful, odorous summer months, when our life was one of undisturbed routine, I never escaped the sense of dread. I hoped the intangible would take shape; surely something intangible that would be embodied, hung over the house.

I may not be able to make this certainty appear so vividly to you as it did to me. It permeated; it was in the atmosphere; it hung over the woods; it filled the house. It came with the odors of blossoms; it was expressed in the summer winds; it was threatened in the lightning which flashed over the river. I could not reconcile this effect to such a cause as that feeble ghost story of the pool. I could not dread that ghost or feel its presence. It was a benevolent ghost needed for decoration.

I asked the people of the house, the servants, and found that for them it was largely a superstition. They all had been brought from the city, and only a few, such as Jed, a gardener, the housekeeper and the cook had been long enough in the house really to be associated with it.

Jed was the only one that willingly would be in the vicinity of the pool at night. The others might laugh at the suggestion of terror, but they would not willingly test their superiority to superstition. If they had been really frightened, they could not have been kept in service. They were not. The place was large, comfortably inhabited and genial. There was a touch of dread at one spot. They avoided the spot, and it was negligible so long as they did avoid it.

In the small town of Hartley there was more of the legend than there was at Hartley house. To the people who lived at a distance and came in contact with the place only on occasions, it had an alien, exotic air. Mr. and Mrs. Sidney had come from South America, from Montevideo, where they had lived many years. The circumstances of their selection and purchase of the place were normal, but the villagers spiced a great deal of gossip with notions of the alienism, wealth, aloofness and odd habits, concerning which gossip ran from our servants to the Hartley householders.

I have mentioned that my first morning at Hartley house a gardener asked me to see one of his children, which had a bad cough. The man had a good deal of sickness in his family in the next few months, and I was of considerable service.

"I shall not hesitate to kill you."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SAVAGES WORE BODY ARMOR

Gilbert Islanders Used That Form of Protection, but It Was Limited to Leaders.

Only one tribe in the South Pacific islands ever rose to the height of inventing armor to be used in their warfare. But even this tribe, the Gilbert islanders, turned out only a few suits, owing to the work entailed in the manufacture. Francis Dickie says, in the Scientific American, that the suits were limited in number, and that every village was the proud possessor of one. At the outbreak of a conflict between villages, not all the inhabitants went to war, but the most doughty warrior was dressed in the village armor and sent against the champion of the rival place.

The brown-colored fabric covering the body and legs, which formed the Gilberts' armor, was made out of coir string taken from the husk of the coconut, so closely woven as to make a protection stronger than board, and having greater lightness to recommend it. A further breastplate, invulnerable to any native weapon, was made from the dried skin of the stingaree, or ray fish, which dried as hard as metal.

In the last few years peace has settled over the Gilberts and the armor has ceased to be manufactured. The few suits in existence have all been seized by collectors of rare articles.

Diamond Thieves Easily Detected.

Diamond stealing in the South African mines is becoming precarious business. The blacks still swallow them or hide them in self-inflicted wounds, but these methods no longer suffice. Coolidge X-ray tubes are so mounted in a frame as to illuminate the whole body of the stripped native standing before them. The entire body of the hundreds of miners can thus be brought into view in the fluoroscope in a few seconds, and any diamond present, even if behind thick bones, is quickly detected. The glow of the diamond under the X-rays, as well as its dense opaqueness, aids in detection, it is said.

Shakespeare as Poacher.

In the description of the amenities of the Shakespeare hotel, Stratford-on-Avon, which was recently put up at auction, the story is revived that Shakespeare came before Sir Thomas Lucy on a charge of stealing deer from Charlcote park. The charge is open to the comment that in the time of Elizabeth there was no deer park at Charlcote. To this it is retorted that deer were to be found in many parks not described as deer parks. As to all which it may be suggested that Shakespeare may have been brought before Lucy for stealing any deer within his jurisdiction.

Safeguarding the Goat.

In Switzerland the goat is placed ahead of all other animals. If a boy plagues a goat he can be fined and sent to prison. If a person meets a goat on a path and drives him aside he can be arrested. If a goat enters the yard of a person not his owner, and is hit, the person guilty must pay a fine.

Aristocrats Among Sweaters

NECESSITY—that humble and useful mother of inventions—brought forth some years ago after her kind the humble and useful sweater and its early intention and seeming destiny, was simply to be comfortable. Mankind adopted it and has required nothing further than comfort from it all these years. Women adopted it and have led it a merry chase into the land of fancy and changing styles. She requires that it be novel, varied, chic, first, and somewhat useful afterward, and it is far from humble or plain now. There are in fact so many diversified kinds of sweaters that pictures of them might provide illustrations for a calendar of the year.

July presents us with such delightful affairs in the smart company of sweaters as that new model shown in the picture. It appears to be of fiber silk knitted so as to show a solid rib alternating with an open mesh. It is a slip-over model, among the neatest of this popular variety, and is very nicely adjusted to the figure with definite fit about the shoulders and bust, and a charming management of the waist. It appears that we cannot tell the story of anything these days without adding a little yarn to it. Yarn trims everything—hats, blouses, frocks, and provides a double cord for the waist of this sweater and a single one for the neck. Little yarn balls finish the cords that are tied in the simplest bows.

This sweater has some own sisters that are hand crocheted of silk yarn in many of the bright sweater tones. Usually they are finished at the bottom with a deep fringe. Narrow picot-edged ribbon may be used for finishing touches or long narrow sashes hand-crocheted to match.

Besides these rather luxurious silk sweaters in open work designs there are many in light-colored wools; as a rule women who crochet or knit make them for themselves. But the machine-made sweaters are so attractive that no one need long for anything better. Some women buy a plain, machine-knit sweater and crochet an edge about it in yarn of a light contrasting color. This is easy to do and gives a distinctive personal touch to the garment.

Ribbons Inspire Accessories

WHEN the young woman's fancy isn't turned to thoughts of love it must certainly be occupied with thoughts of sports apparel for midsummer. It doesn't seem possible that there can be time left for anything else in minds that succeed in thinking up so many sporty clothes. Everything from hats to shoes is permeated with this flavor of out-door pastimes.

Gifted and ingenious designers are taking advantage of their ribbon opportunities and converting lovely ribbons into smart soft hats for sports wear. This is not a new venture for the ribbon hat has proved so practical for sports and also for between-seasons wear, that it is here to stay. A feature of these hats that makes them strong with the tourist is that many of them are collapsible and may be carried in a suit case or small bag. Another merit that everyone likes is their flexibility. Brims may be turned up or down and drawn into lines that are most becoming to the wearer. Faille and satin ribbons are most popular for hat making.

A group of these sports hats shown above reveals how successfully ribbons have played their part in this type of headwear and the most natural step in the world was taken by the designer who made bags and scarf to match. In the set at the top, bright green tricolette and faille ribbon make a soft hat and wide scarf, the ribbon—in white—shirred in a puff about the edges of the scarf and across the front of the hat. The girdle of tricolette is very little wider than the ribbon shirred over it.

Just below at the right, there is a hat made of white faille ribbon with picot edge and a bag to match in which the ribbon covers a foundation of white satin. The mounting is silver metal and the handles are of the ribbon. At the left there is a brilliant set made of white satin ribbon having black embroidered figures over it. This hat is made over a light frame and is a dignified example of sports styles. The ribbon is ingeniously managed in the bag, being folded to bring the embroidered figures to the center.

Julia Bottomley

Leather Belts.

New leather belts are interesting. To begin with, they are most of them quite narrow, and as a second thing they are worn often at a point above or below the waistline of the coat or frock they go with. One is a narrow belt of glazed dark blue leather, with a narrow binding of black on each side. This part of the belt reaches around the waist. Then there are two ends of the belt of braided things of the leather which are loosely tied and hang down at the side, front or back.

Figured Foulard Blouses.

Figured foulard blouses are being shown for summer and are attractive.

Looking Forward to Fall.

Talk of fall and winter frocks is now of interest to designers and manufacturers, incidentally to the ultimate consumer as well, and it is interesting to note that in the first fall line that will be brought out, consisting of serges and tricotines as usual, and with navy as usual leading, a great many of the low waistline effects are in evidence. This is arrived at in innumerable ways, but that it will predominate as a style feature seems certain.

A Pink Bride.

Determined to be original in the design of her wedding dress, a young English bride chose pale pink crepe de chine embroidered all over with silver butterflies, with a court-train of pale pink tulle.

A Bride in Gray.

The bride who was married in her traveling suit chose pale gray for it. Coat and skirt, hat, veil, and shoes were all gray, and made a most successful costume for a quiet wedding.

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

By Mary Graham Bonner ©by the Author

IN THE BARNYARD.

"All wild animals like to go together," said Mrs. Hen, "and for that matter all of the tame ones do too. By tame ones I mean we creatures of the barnyard—just as nice creatures as ever happened or will happen, except when more of us come around.

Adore Carrots.

"Now the rabbits are often very tame, but they aren't barnyard animals. They are very fond of lots of the things that the farmer has. For example they simply adore carrots.

"They love clover and many of the other vegetables and how they do relish lettuce! So that I always feel that rabbits are rather near and friendly with us as they like the farmer's food and enjoy home-grown things.

"But as I was saying, lions go together, tigers go together, dogs go together, buffaloes go together, fishes go together, we all go together. All the animals I mentioned aren't wild, however." She grinned a hen's grin.

"I am indeed glad that a tiger, for example, doesn't come along and ask me to take a walk. If a tiger should do such a thing I would most politely say no.

"But we hens all go together and walk about the barnyard in a most friendly fashion.

"Now I have always been more than a mere barnyard creature, an ordinarily tame animal. I am very tame. Perhaps I should not call myself a tame animal but should call myself a tame fowl.

"I will get up in the lap of the farmer's wife. I do not mind getting up in the laps of the children. I don't mind that in the least.

"But the children wriggle more than the farmer's wife does and I am not so happy in their laps. They're restless young dears, they are.

"So many of the chickens are tame just as I am and they too will get up in the lap of the farmer's wife.

"Then Mrs. Pullet Hen will tell stories to her young chickens. Mrs. Pullet is, as you know, very small in size.

"We're all such a friendly lot. And how we do like feeding time! Cackle, cackle, cackle, that is most exciting.

"Of course, we aren't greedy like the pigs are, but we do show joy over our food, a nice, enthusiastic, cordial kind of joy."

"What do all those words mean?" asked Mrs. White Hen.

"Oh," said Mrs. Hen, "they mean the same as eager and glad and all such things. Aren't they nice words?"

"Cackle, cackle, cackle, they're most nice words," Mrs. White Hen said.

"All wild animals," said Mrs. Hen, "are apt to fight. They never fight on any general, chosen place, but on each other's grounds, as a rule. One of them in defense, as a rule."

"What in the world," said Mrs. White Hen, "are you doing all this talk about wild animals for? I've been hearing you talk all the afternoon and you've mentioned wild animals in every other breath."

"Not that much, quite," said Mrs. Hen. "But you know when one is a barnyard animal and has been one all one's life and never expects to be anything else, it is nice once in awhile to talk of a wild life, don't you think it is?"

"I Don't Mind That."

"That is a funny idea," said Mrs. White Hen. "And it is especially funny coming from you, for you are as tame as any hen we ever had on the farm and you keep all your children following your footsteps."

"They don't always follow my footsteps," said Mrs. Hen. "In fact, they rarely follow my footsteps."

"Oh I mean," said Mrs. White Hen, "that they do as you do. They follow your example, in other words."

"Oh, I see what you mean," said Mrs. Hen. "Yes, they do what I say, but now and then I take a talking holiday when I talk of all sorts of things away from the barnyards. Just as people take trips and go to different places so do I take trips and talk differently and of different things. I suppose I am a funny hen; I suppose I am."

Point.

Teacher—William, what is income tax?

Willie—It is when you sit on a tack.

Teacher—No, I'm afraid you don't see the point.

Willie—You don't, sir; you feel it.—Boys' Life.

Not to Her Credit.

Do not be one of the girls whose friends are continually making allowances for them. When people excuse a piece of rudeness on the score that it is only "Mattie's way," or pass over a disagreeable speech with the explanation that "Kitty doesn't mean anything by it," the girl most concerned should set herself to bring about a different state of affairs. For a healthy, normal girl to put her friend in the position of making allowances for her, is far from being to her credit.—Girls' Companion.