The Mystery of Hartley House

By CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND

Illustrated by IRWIN MYERS

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"JOHN!"

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. Doctor John fixes his door so he can't be locked in. He meets Isobel, daughter of the house and falls in love at first sight. In the night he finds the butler drunk and holding Mrs. Sidney by the wrist. He interferes. Mrs. Sidney explains. John buys a revolver. John overhears Jed telling Mrs. Sidney he will have his way. In reply she says she will not hesitate to kill him. Mrs. Sidney asks John to consent to the announcement of his engagement to Isobel. The young people consent to the make-believe announcement. Jed tries to kill John.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

Mr. Sidney never liked to have his vicarious drinking interrupted, but he always was good natured.

"Well, doctor," he said, "what now? Is Jed drinking too much for my health?"

At that moment no possible amount of liquor would have been too much for Jed. The wretch must have thought I was a ghost.

"Jed may drink himself to death, for all me," I said. "That probably is the best end he can come to. I think he is gallows meat, but I want to talk to him when you can spare him."

"We can't spare Jed to have him hanged," said Mr. Sidney. "He's too useful. Who else could drink my wine of an evening? Go along with the doctor, Jed, and see what he wants. It's probably a matter of pills or powders for me."

Jed was recovering from his shock, but he still showed the effects of it.

"No hurry," I said. "I'd rather wait a half hour. I'll be in my room."

I went there and wrote two letters. Both were to one point. They related circumstantially what had happened that afternoon. One I addressed to a lawyer I knew, and the other to Dr. Brownell. Jed knocked at the door as I finished them. He was still unnerved.

"I have something I want you to read," I said, and gave him the letters. He read them and moistened his lips.

"You don't need to talk, Jed," I said. "I'll do all the talking that's necessary. I am not going away. I am going to stay right here, and you'd better be very careful of my health. These letters go out tonight. The men who get them will keep their mouths shut so long as I am alive. If anything should happen to me, whether you had anything to do with it or not, you'd have a difficult time with a jury."

"It was a mistake," he said. "I would not do you any harm. I shot at a rabbit."

"Twice with a pistol, when you had a shotgun?" I said. "You did! I was the rabbit."

CHAPTER IV.

Jed came to me the next day in one of his candid moods.

"I did shoot at you yesterday," he said.

"I know you did," I replied.

"And you're wondering why and you're wondering if I intend to do it again."

"I don't wonder at anything you do," I said. "And you know that if you do it again, the evidence is prepared against you. I think I am perfectly safe. I know you are a coward."

"No, I'm not a coward," he said, as if he were stating a fact and not making a boast. "I never do anything without a purpose, and when I have a purpose, I do it no matter what the consequences may be. The reason I wanted to shoot you was because you were engaged to Isobel. I intend to marry Isobel. Now I know that you are not going to marry Isobel. You are just the foolish fence that her mother thought she could build up around Isobel and keep me from trying to marry her. Isobel doesn't want you. She is laughing at you. So we might as well be friends again."

"You preposterous old fool!" I said. "You senile alcoholic! You are a violation of decency. You enfeebled, exasperating old goat! You would sicken the moral conscience of a mummy. If you ever associate your aspirations with the name of Miss Sidney again, I'll cut your throat with a paper knife."

Jed smiled and made me feel ridiculous.

"I am a more intelligent man than you," he said. "You are too simple for the complexities of life. You could not possibly be sufficient for a girl of Miss Sidney's character. She would die of boredom in six months. There is nothing preposterous about my candidacy for Miss Sidney. I am older than I'd like to be, but that is all."

"You are a hideous old fool," I said, "but I think I can handle you, and I give you warning."

"I am going to be quite friendly," said Jed.

"You flatter yourself," I said.

"Well, anyway," he said, "I'm friendly."

He proved to be so. The life of the house went placidly from day to day. Isobel, with a sense of our posturing toward each other, made mocking gestures of affection which shocked her mother. She particularly delighted to demonstrate, when Jed was serving dinner. I thought she would end by getting me shot in the back, but Jed had rated me finally as unimportant, which did my egotism no good. For such a rascal to discard me, formally betrothed as I was to Isobel, in his scandalous pursuits of that beautiful girl, was preposterous.

If Mrs. Sidney had known that I was idiotically in love with Isobel, she would not have sought relief from her distress by the arrangement which made me her daughter's protective fiance. The only thing I could take credit for in this absurd situation was that Mrs. Sidney was not allowed to know the state of my feelings.

I was as sensible as a corrupting romanticism would permit me to be. I knew that any affection I might place in this fashion was a real and serious emotional vice, which if not controlled might lead to unhappiness. That consciousness had steadied me, but it had not delivered me.

Isobel walked brightly through the old house of tragedy—as surely it was, however hidden the tragedy. She was the glint of sunshine in the aisles of the dark woods, the odor of roses against the wall. She had the charm of the hollyhocks, the freshness of the hepatica in the spring, the beauty of the wild rose in June.

If I showed my feeling more than a liver sausage shows a soul, I hope I may be punished. What I thought of Isobel was my own affair, so long as I kept it strictly my own affair.

I took myself in hand with as much energy and promptness as I could, following the announcement of our engagement. I did not want to confess myself a fool. I did not intend to do so if I could help it.

I overdid it. I became disagreeable. I kept as much out of Isobel's presence as possible. I never willingly was alone with her. I did my best to avoid meeting her or speaking to her. Isobel met the situation with her natural frankness after I had been giving this demonstration of myself for some time.

"Doctor," she said, "this household necessarily imposes friendships upon the people in it. I wonder if we could not be a little more agreeable to each other."

I did not know what to say. I hoped not to be a hypocrite, and I did not want to be absurd.

"I shall be glad to be as agreeable as I can," I said after some mental stuttering. "I want to be, but I am so awkward."

"I want to be, too," said Isobel; "and if we both want to be, we shall not have to glower at each other every time we meet. Even mother does not require it and father would detest it."

Without saying anything more, she made me see that I had used a cheap device to escape the consequences of a foolish affection. The girl in a very friendly fashion had shown me that my avoidance of her was marked, cool and unreasonable. It was wholly reasonable from my poor standpoint, but from no other.

I saw that I was meeting my difficulty by running away from it, and I not only did not like the timidity of escape in this fashion, but furthermore, I did not like the opinion Isobel formed of me because of it. I had to face the music, and after that I did. It ought not to have astonished me that I felt better instantly. I knew that a coward only increased his troubles.

I imagine if I had not seemed such a professional stick, such a thing aloof from human emotions, Isobel would have been merely friendly and kind. As it was, she was tantalizing. She liked me well enough, but that meant very little. If she did not drive, ride, walk or play tennis with me, she had a choice of the servants. It was I or nothing.

I was with Mr. Sidney a number of hours every day. They varied, sometimes seven or eight a day in different periods, sometimes three or four. Very little of this time was occupied in professional duty. Life at Hartley house would have been intolerably lonesome if I had been there merely as a practitioner. And therefore I welcomed a routine that was outside my profession. Mr. Sidney had a delicacy of perception which told him when attention upon even so amiable an invalid might be drawing upon the physical reserve of the people waiting upon him or being with him. He always managed that they never should feel the fatigue of it.

We saw no company at Hartley house. We made no calls and received none. We extended no invitations and received none. The estate was baronial, and it had baronial habits, but it brought no friends to the doors.

It was nearly always with regard to Isobel that the condition seemed unnatural. For an invalid like Mr. Sidney it was natural enough. Mrs. Sidney was wholly devoted to him; I was engaged in professional duties; and for Jed and the servants in the house it was natural to be content with what they had of life or with the performance of duties for which they were paid and which they might abandon at will. But this was Isobel's life. She was young, vibrant, beautiful, but vistas opening into human prospects were closed to her. And she was engaged to a piece of professional dead wood who happened to be the only masculine thing available when her mother was in great distress.

Later Isobel said that as a woman she knew of course that I loved her, but this is evident fiction. She did no such thing, and it would be an unkindness to her to think so. What was only comedy if I were, as she thought I was, an indifferent, unfeeling man, would have been cruelty if it had been known that the position was mockery of denied hopes.

Isobel used me to gain her liberty. She affected familiarities and called me "John" derisively, or worse "dear" or "old dear." I protested, in more pain than she could guess.

"We are engaged," she said. "What should I call you?"

"You might consider the fact that we are not engaged," I suggested.

"But we are. If we don't act as if we were, you'll not be any protection against Jed. Don't you want me to call you John?"

"Of course I do," I said. "It's perfectly straightforward, natural and proper."

"Then it's the 'dear' and 'old dear' you object to, and I perfectly delight in calling you 'old dear.' It fits so well—it is really wonderful. It is almost a complete description as well as a charming appellation. I adore it."

"I object to unnecessary freedom," I said.

"But it helps to deceive Jed."

"Nothing deceives Jed. He was deceived only for a short while. Then he tried to kill me. He apologized afterward for his mistake. He knows the character of our engagement."

"Just the same, he has not bothered mother since then as he did before."

"That is because he is a coward and I have him where I can control him."

Mrs. Sidney did not understand her daughter. That was not astonishing; Isobel was a young American woman; Mrs. Sidney had Spanish traditions. Isobel came naturally, through her father, to a candor which never ceased to amaze and—occasionally—to distress her mother. Isobel said what she thought. Her frankness came from honesty of character. Her lovely mother regarded life as something to be managed by reticence and denial. Mrs. Sidney was esthetic, and if a fact were unesthetic, she denied it and put it out of her consideration. It was, to her, the only proper thing to do.

Isobel was a clever tennis-player and I a poor one. She beat me three or four sets every fine afternoon. She liked to drive a car and ride a horse. I drove and rode with her.

When Isobel said for the first time that she wanted to take me for a drive in the car, her mother made a gesture of dismay. Isobel stood before her and smiled.

"You know we are engaged, mother," she said.

I thought of the hen at the pond's edge seeing her brood of ducklings in the water. Mrs. Sidney was not in a panic and she did not flutter, but her distress was acute. She knew the girl had to develop and she knew that she had to live in North, not South America. But knowledge is not a complete anodyne to pain.

Isobel took her mother's hand and kissed it, and then her lips. She smiled in such an honest, frank, perceptive fashion—I know that a smile can contain all the human understanding in

Isobel Used Me to Gain Her Liberty.

the world, because I saw Isobel's—and then, holding her mother's hand, she allowed Mrs. Sidney to have the moment of distress with the intimate support of her own presence.

It may seem a small struggle that mother and daughter went through, but it did not seem small to me who witnessed it, and it had no rhetorical and little emotional expression.

Isobel knew her mother suffered, but she was wise. Mrs. Sidney dreaded her daughter's adopted mode of life, but knew her daughter.

"Good-bye, mother," said Isobel. "We sha'n't be gone long. Come on, John."

That was the first time she had called me John honestly and without comedy. I knew her finesse. She did it to give her mother the comfortable sense that she was not going upon a wild adventure of an automobile ride with an unrelated man but was within the strict intimacy of the family.

We went driving, Isobel at the wheel. She liked to drive fast and I do not. I am timid. I do not think that locomotion is a genuine human pleasure. Possibly it is, behind either a fast or a plodding horse. I prefer the plodding horse. Locomotion then merely reveals gradually changing facets of the scene; one likes to see the manifold aspects of a landscape unfold. But an automobile driven as Isobel wanted to drive it revealed no facets. It merely blurred the vision and gave the idea that the satisfaction sought was a certain amount of wind blown in the face. For such as love it, not for me!

"That was a difficult scene, doctor," she said.

I knew that was what she would call me next—"doctor." I came directly down out of the clouds.

"I know it was," I said, "and I admired the honest way in which you managed it."

"I think I shall continue to call you John just that way," she said. "It seems more honest and decent. After all, we are engaged."

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Sometimes Mr. Sidney could be taken out in an automobile, of a warm, fair afternoon. It was not often that his strength permitted this, but whenever it did, I was glad not only to allow but to suggest that he make use of all opportunities.

The most beautiful of our river drives brought us, within the limitation of Mr. Sidney's strength, to the penitentiary at Alwick. It was a hideous structure of barracks, work-rooms and walls, of cells and armed guards; but it was in lovely surroundings, and if we took the best roads, we came naturally to the prison walls.

Mr. Sidney would look at the enclosure and the guards in the turrets as if interpreting his own life in the terms of prison existence. We may have taken this drive by the prison road ten times when, approaching it on another of our outings, Mr. Sidney had the driver stop at the entrance.

"I feel very strong and well today, doctor," he said, "and if you do not object, I think I should like to go inside. I have seen the outside so many times, I have a curiosity to see the inside."

I consented, thinking that with Jed and me helping him—we acted as his legs, guiding and sustaining his feeble motions—he was strong enough to make the effort. I did not know whether it was good or bad pyschology to give him a sight of so many imprisoned men, but my instinct suggested that it would, in his case, be good. He was a logical, reasoning man—a rare phenomenon in the human race. If he had been emotional and sentimental, I should have had more doubt.

Mr. Sidney was important enough to be known in the neighborhood. The warden of the prison came to meet him in the office as soon as we had entered. He was very cordial to Mr. Sidney, who himself never showed more his aristocracy of democracy. I am a democrat. I am most fond of an aristocratic democrat. Such was Mr. Sidney.

Mr. Sidney visits the penitentiary.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"LOTUS" PLANT A MYSTERY

Scientists in Dispute as to What Kind of Food Had Such Remarkable Effects.

What was the plant the "lotus eaters" ate, which so destroyed their "pep," strangers who visited their land and partook of the remarkable vegetable losing all desire to return to home and friends?

There has been no end of dispute on the subject. One thing is certain, however, is that it could not have been the Egyptian lotus, which within recent years has begun to be widely grown in water gardens. This plant develops tubers, deep in the mud, which are about the size of hens' eggs and good to eat, but the eating of them has no such deleterious effect as that above described.

The Egyptian lotus is a kind of water lily, whose superb flowers look like huge pink tulips. Once upon a time it grew wild along the banks of the Nile, and the surmise is that originally it was fetched from India, where it is native. It was regarded anciently as the emblem of the Nile, and the symbol of the creation of the world from the waters. To the Egyptians it was a sacred plant. They cultivated it in ponds and tanks, wreathing their heads with the blossoms on festive occasions.

The lotus has had a wonderful influence upon architecture. Its leaves and buds appear in the capitals of classic columns and in every sort of antique decorative carving it is the motif most frequently chosen. The art work of Japan (into which country it was imported) is inspired by it to a greater extent than by anything else in nature.

Flying Casualties.

Revised figures from the war department show that there were but 583 casualties among American aviators in Europe during the war. Of this number 491 were among aviators with the A. E. F. and the remainder among aviators on duty with the British, French and Italian armies. The casualties are classified as follows: Killed in combat, 208; prisoners, 145; wounded in action, 152; killed in action; 41; missing in action, 29; injured in action, 25; interned, 3.

Fox Squirrel's Nests.

In the South, instead of living in the hollow trees, the fox squirrels build big nests in the tops of the pine and other trees, usually of Spanish moss, says the American Forestry Magazine. In these they sleep, also carrying to them the pine cones. In the hardwood forests of the North, dry leaves take the place of the Spanish moss, and a conspicuous nest is built with an entrance hole at the side.

Flat Feet.

Symptoms of flat foot are pain along the instep or even in the calves of the legs, knees, thighs, hips or back, often mistaken for rheumatism or other troubles. The person stands with feet well apart and toes turned outward. The ankle bends inward and the weight falls on the inner line of the foot so that the entire sole rests flat on the ground.

Every boy knows several men whom he intends to whip when he grows up

Ribbons Deftly Used in Frocks

RIBBONS have always played a prominent part in the apparel of women, but they were never so important as they are now. Their manufacturers look to the ingenuity of designers of dress accessories, of millinery and of innumerable pretty furnishings to extend the demand for their products, and these designers have accomplished more than was expected of them. The beauty of the ribbons themselves, proves an inspiration and they have long since ceased to be used merely as decorations. In millinery they make entire hats and have for several seasons, so that the ribbon hat has an established place which it will continue to fill.

By way of showing what can be done with it in the hands of artists, several stars in our American firmament of dress creators have embodied ribbons in summer frocks—and in all sorts of frocks—for morning, afternoon and evening. The results were so good that the idea will carry over—we shall find ribbons in the styles for fall. It was at its best in summery afternoon and evening dresses and an adorable example for either afternoon or evening wear appears in the dress illustrated. It is of lace flouncing, on a net foundation, with very wide and very soft satin ribbon forming part of the bodice and skirt drapery. The ribbon is shirred in four little tucks at the front and in a single shirring at the side where it forms full panniers and falls in two long ends from under them. A few little blossoms made of narrow ribbon and having millinery centers, find a resting place on the flounces, and the same blossoms set in a border and rows on a filmy parasol make it a sister to the lovely frock. After the accomplishments of these artists in summer frocks, curiosity makes whatever they will present for fall already interesting to the fashion reporter.

Late Summer and Its Brides

ALTHOUGH tradition gives June the preference for summer weddings and October proves to be the bride's next choice, no month is entirely forsaken by them. The maid that decides for late summer has some advantages, and among them is the chance to profit by the experience of June brides when she chooses her wedding gown. There were so many innovations in the gowning of this year's brides, great costumers made excursions away from the traditional all-white and gave us white with silver, white and gold and even wedding veils in pale gold. It is for the bride of tomorrow to say whether she will regard these new ideas with favor or fix her allegiance upon the all-white bridal costume.

Experimenting with the wedding veil brought out some new and ingenious adjustments of it and also the veil of chiffon instead of tulle. Premet gave to this particular June a chiffon veil embroidered in silver roses and edged with pearl beads, clinging to the head and revealing the uncovered face through a slit at the front. The bride shown in the picture has chosen this madonna-like draping of the veil, but clings to traditional orange blossoms in wreaths that encircle her head. Her frock of chiffon is laid in deep tucks below the hips, caught up a little at the sides and embellished with occasional clusters of orange blossoms set on the tucks.

Never were bridesmaids more daintily clad in fanciful and gay colors than those who ushered in the brides of June. Taffeta and organdie made a majority of their flowerlike frocks, and they were designed with exhaustless ingenuity. The petal frocks and apron frocks, many frills and lovely embroidery made the achievements of the designers seem to excel all efforts of other Junes. The bride of late summer may follow these precedents.

A dignified costume for a wedding guest finds place in the picture shown here. In dark blue georgette and cream-colored lace it is brightened by a corsage of flowers and a hat of cream georgette and black velvet ribbon. It offers a suggestion for the youthful looking mother of the bride.

Not many brides will choose other than all-white for their own costumes, and not many will resist the gay and beautiful colors that are fashionable for their maids, together making a blithe cortege.

Julia Bottomley

Novel Trimming.

An ordinary overblouse is trimmed with checked gingham.

Lounging Jackets.

Lounging jackets or tea coats are in high favor from a fashion standpoint, as well as for the comfort they give. Deshabille is the name that best describes scome French creations in these indoor dress novelties that are in shape nothing more than huge squares with round, square or V-shaped openings in the center, permitting the square to be slipped on over the head. But the charm and beauty of these simple sacques lie in the materials used; lace and net, georgette and hand embroidery or fringe, or both, with girdles of colorful ribbon or of handmade silk flowers.

Gingham Guimpe Arrives.

Enter the gingham guimpe. It is made, of course, of fine imported material in a neat checked or hairline plaid pattern, with Eton collar and self frills.

Novel Blouse.

Imitation leather is used for an entire overblouse.

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

By MARY GRAHAM BONNER

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SIR DAVID DUCK.

"I put my foot down," said Sir David Duck, as he entered the barnyard.

Mean Old Cloud.

"Why don't you say that you put both feet down, quack, quack?" asked Lady David Duck.

"Because, my dear, that isn't what I mean."

"But it is what you are doing," said Lady David Duck. "Both of your ugly feet are on the ground!"

"Ah, but they may be on the ground, but it doesn't mean the same as when I put my foot down. When I put my foot down I mean that I will not allow it. That's what people say to others when they will not allow them to do things.

"They say: 'I put my foot down. You cannot do it.' They do not say: 'I put both feet down.' No, for if they did it wouldn't sound out of the way. It must sound out of the way and different to make it a stern command."

"Oh, Sir David, how amusingly you talk, quack, quack," said Lady David Duck.

"You haven't asked me as yet what I have to say and it is as plain as the nose on my face that I want to say something."

"Whatever do you mean?" quacked Lady David Duck. "I have no nose on my face and neither have you. What has happened to you?"

"Oh," said Sir David Duck, "that is another expression or saying. I pick these things up."

"It would be better if you picked up food," said Lady David Duck.

"I meant when I said that," explained Sir David, "that it was as plain as the beak on my face that I wanted to tell you about the thing I put my foot down about.

"You see folks use that expression about a thing being as plain as the nose on their face because the nose is plain on every one's face.

"Well, I've picked up these expressions while I've been picking up food, so don't worry, Lady David Duck. You've not been starved at any time, have you?"

"Oh no, no," she said.

"Well," said Sir David, "you see I must tell you what it is that I put my foot down about.

"I heard some children talking and they said: 'Oh, dear, there is that mean old cloud getting in the way of the sun when we want to sun ourselves after our swim in the pond. Just suppose it would rain, how terrible it would be.'

"Now," continued Sir David Duck, "such talk I cannot allow. In the first place if clouds didn't come once in a while and if rain didn't come there would be no ponds for swimming and paddling in, and all the little streams would dry up.

"And the cloud was letting Mr. Sun rest for a moment. But I cannot allow talk which abuses the clouds or the rain for they all help."

"How are you going to prevent such talk?" asked Lady David Duck.

"By my example," said Sir David Duck. "I will show them how I enjoy swimming and paddling and they will realize what it means to a duck.

"And all the little ducklings will do the same and so will you, will you not?"

"Quack, quack, I will do so too," said Lady David Duck.

Show Them.

"And we'll come off with flying colors," said Sir David Duck.

"Flying colors?" asked Lady David Duck. "Quack, quack, what are flying colors?"

"They are colors of glory," said Sir David.

"What, quack, quack, what is that?" asked Lady David Duck.

"When folks come off with flying colors," said Sir David, "it doesn't mean that they come along with all sorts of different colors flying in the breeze, but it means they come off with honors and with great glory, so the expression is that they come off with flying colors.

"So you see how useful I find many expressions. I put my foot down and will not permit an abuse of the clouds and the rain, and it is as plain as the beak on my face why I will not allow such abuse and the way I can stop such abuse is by my example and then we will come off with flying colors—meaning that creatures will see that we are right and will congratulate us for the example we have set and will set. Let us all off now to the pond, quack, quack."

And all the ducks followed Sir David Duck.

Thought for the Day.

"They are never alone that are accompanied with noble thoughts."

Mamma Was Boss.

Two little girls, aged five and six, were playing together on the beach.

"And your papa," queried one. "What does he do?"

"Oh, whatever mamma says," answered the other.

Speed of a Waterspout.

A waterspout is constantly spinning. The moment it ceases it collapses. At the distance of about a quarter of a mile above the sea level its spinning speed has been estimated at six miles a minute.