

Hollow Ash... Hall

BY MARGARET BLOUNT.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)
The rooms were all unfurnished; but in one, "The turret chamber," as it was called, though it was not built in turret fashion, Rose came upon a tangible relic of the past.

It was a large oaken cabinet, black with age. Its doors were open. As they approached it the setting sun broke from a bank of thin white fog, and filled the whole apartment with a ruddy glow. Rose, ever curious, was the first to search the cabinet.

There were several toilet ornaments in Venetian glass and gold upon the upper shelf. Upon the lower one lay a small yellow packet and a fragment of an old letter. Rose took it up eagerly and read these words traced in a delicate yet unfurnished handwriting:

"And so I send the gift, but I fear it will outlive your love. Last night, when you left me you forgot my good-bye kiss; and so this morning I thought—"

The fragment ended. It was the old, old story, coming down from remote years. Woman's tender love—woman's pained recognition of a slight—woman's faith, mixed sweetly with woman's fear of losing what she prized far more than anything else the world had to bestow. Rose stood musing with the torn paper in her hand, till her father spoke.

"Poor little goose! I wonder where she and her lover are now? What is in the packet, Rose?"

The girl broke the string. A long tress of dark brown hair fell lightly over her hand. That was the "gift," no doubt, which was still fresh and glossy, while the head on which it grew was perhaps lying low in the grave.

Rose laid it reverently back beside the letter. Mr. Cowley fidgeted about a moment or two, and then said that they had better go. He had evidently seen enough for that day at least. As for Rose, the dead girl's words seemed sounding in her ear all the way home.

"Yet why dead?" she asked herself, that, as she woke with a start at two o'clock the next morning.

Mrs. Cowley went back to the village hotel in a more agreeable frame of mind. She fondly imagined that the gloom and silence of the Hall had been too much even for the jovial spirits of her husband to encounter. Brighter looked nearer than ever, as she sank placidly to sleep that night.

But the next morning undeceived her. Mr. Cowley was up with the lark, and when she descended with the girls to the nine o'clock breakfast, he was not there. "He had gone to the Hall," meek Mrs. Grimes informed them with a courtesy.

"To the Hall!" gasped Mrs. Cowley in dire dismay. "What for?"

"Mr. Grimes went up with him, mum. They took out a lot of painters and plasterers, mum. Not to speak of the two charwomen as is to go next week."

"Mercy preserve us!" exclaimed the horrified British matron. "Is the man in his senses? Can he think of living there after all that we saw last night?"

Mrs. Grimes shook her head and sighed.

"Men is that contrary, mum, that an angel from heaven would not well know what to do with them!" she observed, sympathizingly. And certainly, after living so many years with Simon Grimes, she ought to have been a judge.

Mrs. Cowley took her breakfast with what appetite she might. At noon her liege lord appeared—dusty, tired and cross. From him she learned that the workmen were progressing favorably, that the place would be ready for the charwomen by the end of that present week, instead of the next, and that everything would be finished by the last day of the month.

"So get ready to move on the first day of December, old lady," he added, merrily, "for we shall keep our Christmas there!"

The week of her occupancy. Carpets were put down, curtains hung up, beds aired and made, drawing and dining rooms swept and dusted; till, from the dismal shell, on which Mrs. Cowley had looked with such horror, a handsome, modern-looking dwelling place was deduced, possessing every comfort which the most fastidious taste could require—at least, for a short sojourn. Mr. Cowley might have been less liberal in furnishing any other house, but here his honor was in some measure at stake, and he was not satisfied till he had done his very best.

He came home late on the evening of the thirtieth of November, and announced, with a pleasant smile, that he was ready for the removal. Rose scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry that her often repeated wish was about to be granted. In her heart she began to feel a little timid, though she would have gone to the stake rather than acknowledge it. Catharine shed some tears, but her father only laughed at her. As for Mrs. Cowley, she packed her trunks as if for an expedition to the Fijee Islands, and Mrs. Grimes assisted her, groaning dimly the while over the "contrariness of them men."

At two p. m., all was ready, but Mr. Cowley never made his appearance till five. Then, taking a mournful farewell of Mrs. Grimes, the devoted wife and mother entered the fly and drove heroically away.

The gates of the Hall stood wide open this time to receive them, and Mrs. Macarthy was smiling and bowing at the door. Lamps were lit in the hall and fires burned in every room. Beautiful carpets, curtains and furniture, together with books and pictures, and a piano, so transformed the gloomy drawing-room that the girls scarcely recognized it. Mr. Cowley was in ecstasies at their exclamations of surprise.

"I knew you would like it," he kept repeating, as he rubbed his hands together, "and I have spared no expense in making it pleasant and comfortable for you. Now, my dear, if you will go upstairs and take off your things, Mrs. Macarthy will give us some tea. I, for one, am as hungry as a hunter. My love, I am glad you like the place so well. Was I not right in urging you to come? I knew you would see it in the end—and you do!"

CHAPTER IV.

But did they "see it" after all? Grave enough was Mrs. Cowley's face as she sat down to that first meal in her new house. The tea was hot and strong—the toast nicely buttered—the cold ham cut with Vauxhall nicety, yet she could not eat. If a door creaked, she started nervously in her chair—if a mouse gnawed at a wainscot, she looked as if she was about to faint. Yet the habit of obedience to her husband's wishes was so strongly implanted within her breast that she never dreamed of saying how uncomfortable she felt. Mr. Cowley had made up his mind to live in a haunted house—consequently a haunted house must be the best place possible to live in. She was serving her fellow creatures by proving to them that the doctrine of ghosts must be false. No martyr ever underwent more agony for the sake of a good cause than she.

At last the meal was over, and the ex-charwoman had cleared away. The group drew around the blazing fire. Mrs. Cowley took her knitting; Miss Catharine, with an air of making herself at home, performed wonderful feats with her crochet needles; Mr. Cowley plished and pshawed over the columns of his Times, which in the hurry of removal, he had not had an opportunity to read before. All were employed except Rose, and she evidently found it very hard to settle to anything. She walked about the room, till her father growled out a request that she would not flit him; so then she lifted the curtain and gazed out for a long time upon the bare and desolate lawn, looking more desolate still beneath the pale light of the wintry moon.

A thought struck her as she stood there. She gave a little delicious shiver, then left the room and went upstairs.

The turret chamber had been prepared for her by special request. Miss Cowley's room was exactly opposite, so that the sisters could easily communicate with each other if necessary. Mr. and Mrs. Cowley had chosen a large, square chamber at the back of the house, and the revolver was already lying on a table close beside the bed. Fires were blazing brightly in all these rooms. They looked exceedingly snug and cozy in the ruddy glow. Still, not the less for fire and candle, did Rose feel the unseen presence of some former inhabitant of the place. She hurried nervously down the passage, entered her own room, took a book from her dressing bag and retreated without daring even to give a glance at the oaken cabinet in the corner. Quicker and quicker she went on her way back, breathing short and feeling terribly frightened, though ashamed that she should do so. She to live in a haunted house, and have no more nerve than this? The thing was ridiculous—she would be more sensible. And making a brave effort to feel collected at the head of the stairs, she heard or fancied she heard one breathing close behind her—felt, or fancied she felt, the touch of a cold,

light hand upon her own. She shrieked wildly, and ran headlong down, only to find the whole family in the hall, looking pale and frightened, and evidently ready to face twenty ghosts, for the benefit of whose fleshless noses Mr. Cowley grasped the tongs.

"Good gracious, Rose!" exclaimed her mother, trembling from head to foot. "What is it? Have you seen anything?"

"No," said Rose, looking extremely silly; "but I was all in the dark at the head of the stairs, and I fancied some one touched me!"

"I wish to goodness you would be sure of your danger, young lady, before you scare us all out of our wits another time!" said Mr. Cowley, leading the way back to the drawing-room and disposing of the tongs in their place once more. "I made sure by your squalling that old Queen Bees, at the very least, was after you. If you are going to fancy ghosts in every direction, you had better go back and take shelter with Mrs. Grimes as soon as you can. Why, here's Kitty, who couldn't bear the idea of this house, and look at her now. She don't like it, and she may believe there are ghosts here, but I don't think she would invent them for herself beforehand, as you seem to have done. No more nonsense, Rose, if you please, or every one in Banley shall know that you, who were so eager to get here, were the first to cry out 'Wolf!' half an hour after you came."

Mr. Cowley, having delivered his lecture, resumed the perusal of the Times. Catharine said nothing, it is true, but even her crochet needles, as she worked, seemed to assume an air of superiority over Rose. That young lady sat, looking sulky beside the fire. Human nature prompted her to throw her book at Catherine's head, but young lady nature came to the rescue, and prevented any such untoward act. At last her sense of injury subsided as she drew near the lamp and began to read.

Certainly she had chosen the queerest volume possible for such a place, it was Mrs. Crowe's "Night Side of Nature," a book well calculated to give a sound nightmare even to the most incredulous opponent of the ghost theory.

For some minutes she was very quiet; but Mrs. Cowley, looking up from her knitting, got a glimpse of the illustrated cover, where, beside the old hall clock, and by the light of a splendid harvest moon, a genuine orthodox ghost, in a winding sheet, is appearing to a terrified maid-servant, just preparing to faint upon the floor.

One look was enough for Mrs. Cowley. She uttered an exclamation that drew every eye to the unlucky book. Mr. Cowley looked over his spectacles at his daughter, as if he had thought she had suddenly gone mad.

"What could have possessed you to bring that horrible thing here?" he asked sternly. "It is the greatest nonsense, only fit to go into the fire. I have half a mind to make you put it there now!"

Miss Rose, at that moment, owed her entire family a grudge; and, having frightened herself to death with the grisly tales she had been reading, suddenly determined to frighten them also.

"If I can't sleep a wink tonight for thinking of these dreadful things, neither shall Catharine," was her amiable resolve. So, putting on her sweetest smile, she looked up from the obnoxious book into her father's face.

"Dear papa, you are just a little prejudiced against Mrs. Crowe—you know you are."

(To be continued.)

An Island of Sulphur.

In the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand, is situated White Island, which consists mostly of sulphur mixed with gypsum and a few other minerals. Over this island, which is about three miles in circumference, and which rises between 800 and 900 feet above the sea, floats continually an immense cloud of vapor, attaining an elevation of 10,000 feet. In the center is a boiling lake of acidulated water, covering fifty acres, and surrounded with blow-holes from which steam and sulphurous fumes are emitted with great force and noise. With care a boat can be navigated on the lake. The sulphur from White Island is very pure, but little effort has yet been made to procure it for commercial purposes.

Record for Longest Reign.

Now that Queen Victoria is dead, Francis Joseph of Austria holds the record of the longest reign in Europe, or, indeed, in the world. He has been on the throne more than fifty-two years and is in the seventy-first year of his life. But Francis Joseph is by no means the oldest ruler. The possessor of this distinction is neither the emperor of Austria nor, as is generally supposed, King Christian of Denmark, who is 82, and has reigned thirty-seven years. The oldest living ruler is a lesser known personality, the Grand Duke Adolphus of Luxembourg, who came into the world in 1817.

Carrier Pigeons in German Army.

Carrier pigeons are largely used in the German army, which has the most complete pigeon service in the world. Hardly any German town of importance is without its pigeon loft, and the kaiser distributes numerous prizes for long and rapid flights.

A Cure for Hiccoughs.

A never-failing cure for hiccoughs that gives prompt relief, is to draw in as much air as the lungs will hold, and retain it as long as possible. Once is generally sufficient, but if necessary, it may be repeated.

When a woman discloses a secret it is always with telling effect.

BIG AFRICAN LAKES.

TRAVELER'S SOLUTION OF THE TANGANYIKA MYSTERY.

Fauna of the Big Lakes Found to Be Wholly Lacustrine—Volcanoes Dam Up a Stream and Turn the Water the Other Way.

The mystery that has always surrounded the great lakes of Central Africa is largely solved in the new number of the Geographical Journal by Mr. J. E. S. Moore. His explorations have linked together much information previously rather fragmentary. Tanganyika was discovered by Burton and Speke in 1857, and the latter brought to England a few shells picked up on its shore which found their way to the British museum. Some of them puzzled the experts, for, though taken from a fresh water lake very far inland, they strongly resembled genera which inhabit the sea. They had also a curiously old world aspect, as if they were lineal descendants of shells which lived about the time when the limestones called oolites were formed, or considerably before our chalk was deposited. But the little known about Africa had led geologists to suppose that, at any rate, the central and southern parts had been above the sea far longer than this. In course of time, however, more discoveries were made in Tanganyika, including shells of similar types, peculiar fishes, crabs, prawns, sponges, and even a jelly fish—in fact, a number of creatures, all suggesting that their ancestors had been marine. Then in 1897 Mr. Moore visited the lake and brought back collections which placed the matter beyond doubt. But the settlement of that question only raised another. In what way did Tanganyika communicate with the sea? Some ten years ago Prof. Suess, of Vienna, by piecing together the information gathered by travelers in the central parts of Africa, came to the conclusion that the continent on its eastern side was traversed by a remarkable group of rifts, which had resulted in the formation of valleys. In these lay the longer and narrower of the African lakes. He traced the "rift system" from Syria, along the valley of the Jordan, down the Red sea, southward into Africa. Near Lake Rudolf it divides the two branches opening out to inclose a broad tract of highlands in the middle of which is the wide Victoria Nyanza. The western arm passes through the Albert lake, Kivu and Tanganyika, turning eastward from the south end of the last to the head of Nyassa. Here it is very probably joined by the eastern branch, which can be traced for a long way, passing to the west of Kenya and Kilimanjaro. These great rifts would seem to be the natural lines of connection with the ancient ocean, and, if so, that could be traced by seeing which of the lakes contained the strange creatures of Tanganyika. So a second expedition was organized, headed by Mr. Moore to examine the whole chain of lakes along the western "Rift Valley," from Nyassa to the Albert Nyanza. His former expedition had made it almost certain that Nyassa had never been in communication with the sea. Consequently, the way could not have been from the south. In Tanganyika he found still more evidence of an ancient marine fauna which had tenanted its waters at a time when the lake covered a much larger area. But neither in Kivu nor in the Albert Edward lake, nor in the Albert Nyanza could he discover any traces of these marine creatures. Their fauna, like that of Nyassa, was wholly lacustrine. More than that, Mr. Moore found that the river draining Kivu descends as a torrent through an upland region to the old head of Tanganyika and that the former lake is cut off from the Albert Edward by a huge mass of volcanoes some of which are still active. Strange as it may seem he gives good reasons for believing that Kivu had been formed by the outbreaking of these volcanoes, which have dammed up a stream that formerly ran to the north till the water at last found an outlet in the opposite direction down to Tanganyika. Thus, strange as it may seem, the sea can only have lain to the west, over the present basin of the Congo.—London Standard.

A Pleasant Fad.

An attractive fashion among the smart men of New York is the sending of dainty hamper of fruit to their masculine friends on feast days and holidays. The wicker hamper are very pretty and are filled most attractively with luscious fruits which nestle amid the green leaves of soft smilax and other foliage. In addition to sending flowers to the friends who are going to cross the briny deep Dame Fashion dispatches fruit. The flowers fade, but the fruit will last until the journey ends, and even in sickness fruits can be eaten often when nothing else can. So the luscious product of Pomona is packed in dainty baskets and sent to convey sweet messages and kind wishes for bon voyage.

Memorial Church for Richmond.

It is proposed to erect a unique memorial church in Richmond, Va. In addition to memorial windows in honor of departed naval and military heroes, there will be a window in honor of Christian bankers, another for railroad men and a third for iron workers. These will be erected by contributions from representatives of the several classes which they will honor, and all who contribute will be provided with cards which will admit them when visiting the church to pews opposite the memorials in which they are interested.

ENGLAND'S NEW WARSHIPS.

Preparations for a Batch of 18,000-Ton Battleships.

Plans are now being prepared for a new batch of first-class battleships, that will out-Herod Herod in the matter of size. Hitherto we have kept our monsters of the deep down to 15,000 tons, as compared with 12,000 tons odd in the French, German, Russian and United States navies. But France in her latest ships, is going to 15,000 tons, and has talked of 18,000. The United States, which was once a partisan of "moderate dimensions," has gone up to 15,000 for her latest ships.

On that displacement both nations have got more guns and armor than British designs provide. In order not to be left behind, and still to preserve various heavy fads deemed essential for British ships, our admiralty has decided to put on weight, and the new battleships, Queen and Prince of Wales, will be of 18,000 tons displacement. The armament is not yet definitely settled, but it will consist of four 12 inch Mark IX, and probably eight 7.5 inch, ten 6 inch, and twenty or more 3 inch (12-pounders). The 7.5 is a new gun, of which a good deal has been heard for some time, though it has not hitherto appeared afloat. It is to be known as the 7½ inch, its caliber being 7.7 inches. Its adoption now is of a somewhat half-hearted nature, says the London Globe. Objections have been raised against it on the score of the weight of the projectile, 200 pounds, which is rather heavy for manual use. The recent vast improvements in armor—six inches of Krupp armor are equal to a foot of Harvey steel armor or eighteen inches of iron—have, however, rendered absolutely necessary, a more powerful weapon than the convenient 100-pounder 6 inch. Two years ago it was practically decided to mount the 7.5 inch gun in all new ships, but for some unaccountable reason the decision hung fire. A feature of the new ships is that, owing to their enormous bulk, they will, it is hoped, risk only comparatively small inconvenience from a torpedo. As that weapon can now be fired with accuracy at range of a mile or more the torpedo is a far more important weapon than it was four or five years ago. Submarines, too, are helping to make the torpedo a serious rival of the gun. Some measure of salvation lies in bulk, for the bigger the ship the more easily can systems of water-tight compartments be amplified.

King Alfred the Great.

The forthcoming commemoration of King Alfred the Great, which will take place during the coming summer at Winchester, England, will be one of the most striking and appropriate events of the first year of the new century. Winchester is the monarch's place of burial and the ancient and royal capital of England, and the commemoration is one on which her majesty the late queen early bestowed her approval. The colossal statue of the king which is now being executed by Hamo Thornycroft, R. A., will take a prominent place among the permanent memorials which will be the outcome of the forthcoming celebration.

This striking figure is now complete in plaster and in the hands of the founders to be cast into bronze. It measures over sixteen feet in height and some idea of its colossal size may be gleaned by a comparison with the sculptor who stands by its side. It is, moreover, of Mr. Thornycroft's best work. The base, which is at the same time both bold and simple, will be composed of two huge granite monoliths, which are now in Cornwall awaiting transport, weighing respectively forty and thirty-five tons.

Report Was Not Explicit.

An embarrassing moment occurred at one of the annual meetings of the committee of the Church of England Temperance society, over which the late bishop of London presided. The report of the ladies' committee was read, which, among other information, contained the statement that "during the last year much attention had been paid to barmalids." A very audible titter ran round the meeting, which was changed to undisguised laughter as the following words were read: "This has, in many cases, led to their being visited in their homes." So loud was the merriment of the clergy that the chairman, fearful of more alarming ambiguities, rose and smilingly observed: "Perhaps gentlemen, we may take the report as read."—London Chronicle.

The Fright the Ghost Had.

During a confirmation tour in the diocese of Peterboro the late bishop of London put up one evening at an old manor house, and slept in a room supposed to be haunted. Next morning at breakfast the bishop was asked whether he had seen the ghost. "Yes," he replied, with great solemnity, "but I have laid the spirit; it will never trouble you again." Being further questioned upon the subject the bishop said: "The ghost instantly vanished when I asked for a subscription toward the restoration of the Peterboro cathedral."—Argonaut.

Bore Thirteen Children and Lived to Be 109.

Mrs. Margaret King, the oldest inhabitant of Decatur county, died this morning at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. Frank Lohrer, in this city, aged 109 years, says a Greensburg, Ind., dispatch to the Indianapolis Journal. She was born near White Oaks, Ohio, in 1791, and came to this state with her parents in 1802, locating near Vevay, where she witnessed the carrying away into captivity by the Indians of an older sister. She was the mother of 13 children, seven having gone before at advanced years.

COLLIDE IN A STORM

One Man Killed and Another Severely Injured.

SNOWSTORM CAUSE OF DISASTER

Passenger Train Under Full Headway When Collision Occurs—Aged Couple Killed on Rail in Platte County—Miscellaneous Nebraska Matters.

JOHNSON, Neb., March 23.—A head-on collision on the Burlington, in which one man lost his life and another was severely injured, occurred about three miles east of Johnson. A blinding snow storm was raging at the time and it seems to be hard to determine who is accountable for the accident.

Between Auburn and Johnson are two or three country sidetracks at the stone quarries. It is no unusual thing for the freight trains to take these sidetracks to allow the passenger trains to pass. After waiting some time for the freight, passenger train No. 98, Conductor Cronkrite in charge, left Johnson east, probably believing the freight was on one of the sidetracks mentioned. At the same time freight No. 113, in charge of Conductor Burlingham, was stuck in a snowdrift at the point stated.

The passenger train got under full headway and on account of the blinding blizzard none of the trainmen on either train knew of the impending accident.

The engineer and fireman on the freight jumped at the moment of collision. Engineer George McMillen of the passenger jumped and suffered a broken leg, but fireman Fred Jensen of the passenger was not so fortunate. He was caught in the wreck of his engine and scalded to death by escaping steam. No one else was injured, aside from being considerably shaken up. Both engines were considerably stove up and several cars were derailed.

By Bullet and Rope.

HOLDREGE, Neb., March 23.—The suicide of Andrew Johnson, a well-to-do Norwegian farmer, living north-west of here near the Westmark post-office, occurred Monday. The report is that he first hung and then shot himself. He was dead when found by his wife when she went to call him to breakfast. Mr. Johnson was an old settler. It is reported that he had been mentally unbalanced for some time. He leaves a wife and two daughters.

Train Kills Aged Couple.

COLUMBUS, March 23.—Josiah McFarland, aged 78, and his wife, aged 75, were instantly killed at a grade crossing one mile west of the city. They had left home to come to town. About eighty rods from the house the road crosses the Albion branch of the Union Pacific. Train No. 70 struck them on the crossing and they were both instantly killed, though their horse was uninjured.

Coal Discovered at Beatrice.

BEATRICE, Neb., March 23.—A splendid specimen of coal was discovered here by workmen who were engaged in excavating for brick clay, one mile from the postoffice. When they had excavated twenty-five feet they struck a thin layer of shale and directly underneath they found coal. The vein is two feet in thickness, and Robert Klose, who has a lease on the land, will make further developments.

Hang to the Fence Post.

LEIGH, Neb., March 23.—Andrew C. Peterson was found dead, hanging to a fencepost. He had lived with his son Andrew, fifteen miles southeast of Leigh. The man had made a rope out of several pieces of binding twine, tied it around his neck and hung the loop of the other end over the top of a fencepost. When found his lifeless form was in a sitting posture, partially resting on the ground.

Rich Ocher Beds.

PONCA, Neb., March 23.—De Nore and Ludwig of Ponca have taken a mineral lease on several hundred acres of land lying at the mouth of the Iowa, near the Missouri, on which they claim to have found valuable deposits of red and yellow ochre.

Asks Bids on Letter Boxes.

WASHINGTON, March 21.—The Postoffice department has issued a call for bids for furnishing street letter boxes to the government for the next four years, for use in cities throughout the country.

Academy Needs Funds.

CHADRON, Neb., March 23.—The trustees of Chadron academy met and decided to inaugurate a vigorous campaign during the coming week to raise funds for current expenses. Rev. Theodore Clifton, D. D., of Chicago, is here and will start the movement by two vigorous appeals to the people of Chadron for necessary money to pay current expenses for this institution. It is expected that a hearty response will be given.