

The Mystery of Hartley House

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By CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND

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.

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 abnormality. There was first, the man with the wonderful will to live which had interested Dr. Brownell. There was the alien 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

A whippoorwill was reiterate in the woods at night, and its call came from dark recesses odorless 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 locking 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.

the sensation which comes to a diffident man, unaccustomed to women, when he dares to think for the first 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 ecstasy 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 Mrs. 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."

"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 my 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.

"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 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 my 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."

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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 over-

stepped 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, odorless 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



She Had Been Greatly Disturbed, but She Was Roman.

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)

Varnish to Imitate Ground Glass.
To make a varnish to imitate ground glass dissolve 90 grains of sandarac and 20 grains of mastic in two ounces washed methylated ether, and add, in small quantities, sufficient benzine to make it dry with a suitable grain, too little making the varnish too transparent and an excess making it crapy. The quantity of benzine required depends upon the quality, from one-half to one and one-half ounces, or even more. The best results are obtained from a medium quality. It is important to use pure washed ether, free from aprilt.

Switzerland 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.

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By REV. F. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR AUGUST 15

THE SINS AND SORROWS OF DAVID.

LESSON TEXT—II Sam. 12:9-10; 13:1-33. GOLDEN TEXT—Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.—Gal. 6:7. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL—II Sam. 11:20.

PRIMARY TOPIC—David's Grief Over Absalom.
JUNIOR TOPIC—David and Absalom.
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Absalom's Selfish Life and How It Ended.
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Elements of Weakness in David's Character.

I. David's Sins (12:9, 10).

1. Adultery (v. 9; cf. 11:1-4). David instead of going forth at the head of the army as was the duty of the king (11:1), sent Joab and his servants, and he himself lounged around at home in idleness. It was while in idleness that he fell a victim to his lust and committed adultery with Bathsheba. "An idle brain is the Devil's workshop." The crimes of the world are committed for the most part by idle men and women.

2. Murder (12:9; cf. 11:15-21). Having committed adultery with Uriah's wife, David tried to cover up his sin by killing Uriah. He ordered Joab to place Uriah at the forefront of the battle where he would surely be killed. When men sin they endeavor to cover up their sin by committing other sins, and usually it requires the doing of greater wickedness to cover up wrong that has been done.

II. David's Sorrow (13:1-33).

1. The battle between Absalom and David (vv. 1-18). Following Absalom's revolt, David fled from Jerusalem. After counsel with Ahithophel and Hushai, Absalom with his men went in pursuit. Absalom planned well, but made one great mistake—he left God out of the question.

Being dissuaded by the people, David foregoes his purpose of going forth with the army. He sent the army forth under three commanders. His one special request as they went to battle was that they deal gently with Absalom. The victory of David's army was overwhelming. The interference of Providence is marked in that more died in the entanglement of the woods than by the sword. In the flight, Absalom was caught in the bough of a tree by the head, and was left hanging as the mule went forth from under him. Perhaps his long hair which had been his pride was the instrument of his destruction. While thus hanging, Joab thrust him through the heart with three darts. This awful end was deservedly met (Deut. 27:16, 20; 21:23). They disgracefully disposed of his body (vv. 17, 18). They cast it into a pit and piled stones upon it as a fitting monument to his villainy. How different from what he planned (v. 18). His one ambition was to be remembered. A heap of stones piled upon him in contempt is quite different from a tomb in the king's vale.

2. The victorious tidings announced to David (vv. 19-32). He was anxiously waiting for news from the battlefield. So anxious was he that he stationed a watchman upon the walls to look for some messenger to appear. His first question to the messenger shows what was uppermost in his heart. It was the welfare of his boy.

3. David mourns for Absalom (v. 33). He received the news of his rebellious son's death with much regret. The good news of the victory was entirely lost sight of through excessive grief. The sobs of his poor heart must have been awful. Perhaps it is impossible to analyze his sorrow, but most likely the following elements were present:

(1) The loss of a son. The ties of nature bind together the hearts of parents and children in such a way that separation by death is very trying; (2) the death of a son in rebellion against his father and God. Could he but have had the assurance that this course was regretted, or could he have heard a cry of forgiveness, his grief, no doubt, would have been greatly lessened; (3) he knew that his rebellious son had now gone to answer to God for his crimes—he knew their parting was forever; (4) he knew that this was but the bitter fruit of his own sin. In a sense he was the destroyer of his own child. May this example deeply impress all parents as to their responsibility! Away from this dark picture we turn to contemplate the depths of a father's love. Death effaces all faults; all wrongs are forgotten and only the memory of happy days is kept. The father is willing to die, even for a rebellious son. This illustrates God's love to us in Christ which made him willing to die for his children.

The Greatest.

The greatest man is he who chooses the right with invincible resolution; who resists the sorest temptations from within and without; who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully; who is the calmest in storms, and whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, is the most unflinching.—Channing.

Profit by Mistakes.

To make no mistake is not in the power of man; but from their errors and mistakes the wise and good learn wisdom for the future.—Plutarch.

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Chickens and Chickens.

"Do your neighbor's chickens bother you any?" asked an East Side gentleman of his neighbor, who lived near a large farm.

"No," replied the other, thinking that reference was made to the neighbor's three comely daughters. "They go down town every day, so we don't see much of them.—Columbus Dispatch.

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