

# The Mystery of Hartley House

By CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND

Illustrated by IRWIN MYERS

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## MYSTERY!

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

## CHAPTER I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It somewhat astonished me when suddenly he began to talk. We were then about a half mile from the house. "I wish you had come an hour earlier," he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To me too," said my driver. "And

I don't want it ever to look extraordinary."

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

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

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

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

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

"Jed," it said, "who's there?" The servant opened the door wider, and I saw a lady, a South American, I thought. "I am Dr. Michelson," I said. "Yes, doctor," she replied, "we have been expecting you. I am Mrs. Sidney. Where is your baggage?"

"I have only a handbag with me here," I said. "Come in," she said, "Jed will take it."

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

"Jed," I said, in my room, "we have not made the best start for two people

very beautiful and that now she was very unhappy. Seeing her again, I retained my first impressions.

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

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

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

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

The house was as air when I reentered. Jed was the first person I saw, and to my astonishment he was not only civil but pleasant and candid. "Did you have a fair night, doctor?" he asked. "Sometimes a first night in a new place is disturbed, and I owe you apologies. We have had here occasion at times for locking doors on the outside as well as on the inside, and last night I forgot myself and threw the bolt of your door. I am occasionally in liquor, and last night I had a touch too much."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I never played."

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

"A young doctor does not drink."

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

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

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

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

In the dog kennels were mastiffs and a number of Alredales. I said to Jed that it seemed as if precautions had been taken against a perceived danger. He had been affable during the day, but his face clouded instantly. "The wall was here when Mr. Sidney bought the place, but we are in a way isolated," he said shortly. "It is reasonable to take precautions. It will be a precaution for you not to go roaming the grounds at night. The dogs are not friendly then."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As we passed the pool, Charles referred to it. "What is it?" I asked. "What's the story?"

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

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

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

Love at first sight.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HUNTING THE SPERM WHALE

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

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

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

Sickening Discovery.

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

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## TAKE BUSINESS MAN FOR THIEF

Killed by Police Who Find Him Looking His Office Safe.

## IS SHOT AS HE FLEES

Previous Experiences With Burglars Led Auditor to Believe It Another Visitation—Police Fire Four Shots.

Chicago.—Charles C. Dietrich, forty-seven years old, the auditor and former secretary of the Windsor Furniture company, was killed in the offices of the firm.

A policeman, mistaking him for a burglar, shot him to death. The Windsor company had felt the need of an inventory. Dietrich, secretary of the firm for ten years previous to January 1, 1920, had been retained as confidential adviser. The new secretary, George Lyons, had asked him because of his long familiarity with the firm's affairs, to "take stock."

Decides to Work Sunday. With a habit formed in 20 years' employment by the firm, he went to the office to work on Sunday. Throughout the afternoon and early evening he toiled on the books.

Presently along the dark and deserted sidewalk outside came Elmer J. Bradshaw, a watchman for the Chicago Protective agency. Bradshaw paused before the window.

The glass was dirty. The old-fashioned electric bulbs gave only a dim light. And half revealed, half shadowed, Bradshaw saw a man fingering the combination of the old-fashioned safe. He watched him for a moment. Then he turned and softly ran to a telephone and called police headquarters.

A flivver squad, armed for action, rushed forth. They drove up to the deserted corner.

Meanwhile Dietrich had grown tired of his work and started to lock his memoranda in the safe.

There came a tap on the window. Dietrich looked up. Outside in the gloom were several forms.

The Summons of Death. "Come out here; we want to talk to you; we're police officers," said Detective Sergeant Frank Lorenz.

Dietrich on another night months ago had observed forms like that while working late. They had been robbers, bent on attacking the safe. But at the moment they had shot at him he had balked them by slamming the door and fleeing toward the rear of the place. And he tried that plan again.

His hand reached for the dangling chain of the light bulb that would plunge the room into darkness. At the same time he sprang to his feet. But his hand never reached the dangling chain. A shot shattered the window, and as Dietrich ran toward the rear door, leaving the light on, Lorenz fired a second time.

Dietrich fell. Two more shots passed through the rear door before his body lay still.

USES BABY AS POLICE SHIELD

Louisville Man, Armed, Holds Off Officers Till House Is Rushed.

Louisville.—Shielding himself behind a month-old baby, held in his arms, and brandishing a pistol, according to detectives, Alton Sharp, thirty-five years old, kept them from his house, filled with men, women and children, until a squad of police reserves, with drawn pistols, surrounded the place and rushed the front door.

Amid shrieks and cries from the women and children, three of the men were taken into custody. Police began search for five other men.

Detectives Hauler and Ungles had gone to the house to serve two warrants, charging grand larceny against "Jack Ross and Bill Sharp," but were told the men were not known there.

Alton Sharp said that he held the baby in his arms for his own protection and that he grabbed the pistol before he knew who the men were.

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Ma Wants a Change. "Going away this summer?" "Guess not. Pa and ma can't agree."

"What's the matter?" "Pa wants to go somewhere where he can play golf, and ma insists on going to a place where golf has never been played."

## HOT WEATHER Hits the Stomach Hardest

Chicago, Ill.—Hot weather upsets the strongest stomach and causes serious trouble for the weak ones, so word is now going out to thousands of eatonic users that they should, during this hot weather, be on the safe side and take one eatonic tablet about half an hour before meals, as well as after eating. Do this and keep the excess acids and poisonous gases from forming in stomach and bowels. Eatonic acts quickly; it will help the appetite and take away the hot-weather, feverish, thirsty feeling from mouth and stomach, because V takes up the excess acids, poisons and gases and carries them out of the body and, of course, when the cause of the trouble is removed, there can be no bad feeling. Eatonic is like a bit of candy, and is recommended to all as a safe, sure remedy these hot days for stomach and bodily troubles, caused from overeating and drinking cold things. Adv.

Probably Did That. "Naw, I never vote. I never bother with public affairs." "Did you consent to be counted when the census was taken?"

To Have a Clear Sweet Skin. Touch pimples, redness, roughness or itching, if any, with Cuticura Ointment, then bathe with Cuticura Soap and hot water. Rinse, dry gently and dust on a little Cuticura Talcum to leave a fascinating fragrance on skin. Everywhere 25c each.—Adv.

Jud Tunkins says one beauty about votes for women is that the system brings politics into the home and gives the folks something to talk about besides their relations.

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Total Collapse. "She dropped her eyes." "That must have been the time her face fell."

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