

# The Mystery of Hartley House

By CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND

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## CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

He was turning out the lights, but he was reversing the reasonable process. He went down the hall to the light at the stairway leading to his room and turned it out. Then he came back, past the recess in which I stood, turning out lights as he went, and the last light he extinguished was the one at the foot of Mr. Sidney's stairs.

Now the hall was in complete darkness and was quiet. Jed, like myself, I guessed, was in hiding—but for what reason? Then I heard the faintest stirring near by. It came nearer. I tried to keep from breathing audibly. I could hear another person's breathing. It was Jed, beyond doubt. He came into the recess where I stood. It was only five or six feet deep but fully twenty feet long. He was at one end, as nearly as I could judge. I was at the other.

The situation, a product of supercaution, had grown ridiculous and also a bit ghastly. Here were Jed and I, standing in utter darkness in a small recess in the hall, he not knowing of my presence, I not knowing his purpose.

I decided to make my escape. I had, as usual, my electric flash in my pocket. If he heard me and challenged me, I could throw the light on him, challenge him, and say that I was on my way to the telephone to consult Doctor Brownell, and make him explain. His position was the awkward one. I had an idea that even if he heard me he would not challenge.

I made my escape without noise—or if I made any Jed did not inquire; and I found the office door in the dark. I intended merely to use the flash, find the telephone and do my errand in the dark. But I had just flashed the light once about the room when I heard a person at the door. This was not a stealthy person; the hand that touched the doorknob was resolute. By this time nothing rational seemed reasonable. The house of mystery had so asserted itself that one, hearing a noise, hid. Before me, revealed in the single flash of light, was a tall clock—and I was flattened against the wall the farther side of that great clock before the person at the door was in the room.

The person carried a candle—and it was Mr. Sidney. He was completely dressed and wore an overcoat and a cap which came down over his ears. His hands were gloved and he was well protected against more severe weather than that of this crisp October night.

His candle lighted the large room but dimly, and I felt secure, seeing immediately that he had a definite object. He went to the corner of the room, took up a heavy cane which I had often seen standing there, and with it in his hand went toward the door as if his business in the room were wholly done.

As he did so, I saw his face plainly in the candle light. It was wholly changed. It indicated ferocity, hate, malevolence, a bitter sense of injury—a terrible face, hardly recognizable as that of the gentle, courteous, jovial Mr. Sidney. He closed the door and was gone.

When Mr. Sidney had been gone a moment, I heard him open the front door and heard him close it after him. I should have followed him to the



I Saw His Face Plainly in the Candle Light.

front door, but Jed was somewhere in the hall. I waited at the half-open door of the office. Presently I could hear Jed coming down the hall, carelessly now. He also went to the front door, and I heard it opened and closed again.

I went to a window of the office which gave a view of the lawn. I could see one figure slowly crossing the open space toward the path leading down to the river. Jed was standing just outside the shadow of the house.

The father figure—Mr. Sidney, as

I knew—passed into the dense black of the thickets by the path. Then Jed stepped forth and went quickly across the open. I went to the front entrance and stood on the porch.

The hunter's moon was at full, and the place was luminous in a soft, misty yellow light.

I had tremors, frankly—felt the presence of tangible dangers, unseen, and of intangible terrors. I never felt such oppression, doubt, distress and dismay in my life. My patient was on a strange errand far beyond any strength I ever knew him to have; and Jed, whom I always dreaded, was following him.

It may be wondered why I was not instantly in chase and why I stood worried and indecisive. The only explanation is that I knew, as surely as one could know anything by reason and conjecture, that whatever was happening that night had happened this same night for a number of years in the past, and that whatever it was, it had direct connection with the secret of the place which Mrs. Sidney so earnestly desired me not to possess. For these reasons, or upon this instinct, I acted as I did and stood on the porch listening to the unnaturally late whippoorwill and looking out toward the dark woods and thickets which stood at the edge of the yellow moonlight.

The tension was so great that I got a distinct shock when out of this wall of darkness came a figure running into and across the moonlit space toward the house. I knew it must be Jed, and I waited where I stood as he approached. He barely had come into the shadow of the house when another figure came out of the dark wall of the thickets and came slowly across the moonlit space.

Jed, running up the steps, saw me and gasped with astonishment, but recovered himself with wonderful promptness.

"Inside, man, inside, and act natural," he cried, "Come"—taking my arm—"in the office."

He was so certain and so commanding that I did just what I was told.

"Into the office, man," he said, still clutching me. "What are you doing abroad? This night of all nights! But no matter. Into the office, and turn on the lights. Turn on the lights in the hall—not all of them, but some of them."

He ran to do it himself and was all flutter and activity. Then he ordered:

"Into the office now, and act natural. You're a man of genius; think of something we could naturally be doing at this time. Think quick man; it's beyond me. What are you doing here? Good Lord, what are you doing here? I could have managed it without you. Why did you have to be on the scene? And I can think of nothing!"

"You have severe cramps in the stomach," I said. "It's not to be wondered at, considering the way you abuse your stomach. I may say you are the only human being I ever was glad to see drinking himself to death. You have now some premonitory symptoms of gastritis. You have got me up. If I do not have a collar and tie on it will look more natural."

I tossed these articles and my coat behind a couch. "And possibly if you were less clad it would help the illusion." Jed rid himself of collar, tie and coat and disposed of them in the same fashion.

"Now, I imagine," I said, "we are reasonably convincing as physician and sinner. What are your symptoms?"

"You're a man of genius!" Jed exclaimed. "Wait a minute."

He ran to the window, concealing himself behind a curtain.

"He's almost here," he said, as he looked out on the ghastly white lawn. Then he came running back.

"The door had better be opened," he said, and he threw the door to the office open. Then he sat in one of the chairs and began to whine loudly.

"It's an acute shooting pain, doctor," he said loudly and then he whispered: "What ought it to be?"

I heard the front door open and shut.

"I have often told you," I said with loud professional dignity, "that there is a penalty attached to such habits as yours. Have you any nausea?"

"Sick as I can be with pain," said Jed, groaning tremulously.

"I don't mind at all being aroused, Jed," I said, just loud enough to carry to the person approaching and to sound to Jed with me in the office.

"That is a part of my business here."

I knew Mr. Sidney was standing in the doorway. So did Jed. Neither of us betrayed our knowledge until the strange apparition which we knew to be there said:

"Up so late, doctor? Up so late, Jed?"

"Why, Mr. Sidney?" I exclaimed. He was, indeed, an extraordinary looking being. He had controlled his voice and his manner. Discipline was fixed in his soul. But he had not controlled his expression. It was of the wildest excitement. And yet how he

tried to preserve the normalities, taken as he was in such strange circumstances!

"Mr. Sidney!" I exclaimed again, and my wonder was not simulated.

"You abroad tonight at such an hour!" He made a violent effort to keep his composure and succeeded.

"I felt so well, doctor," he said, "and I see so little of the place I love so much, that I took the only chance I had—this wonderful October moon and my faithful physician asleep and off guard, as I thought—to steal out a moment. But Jed—"

Here purpose took hold of him again and defied concealment; he became excited and caused me to have double dread of his tomorrow. "Jed, call the penitentiary," he commanded. "There's a convict escaped. I met him as I walked down the lane toward the river. Call the penitentiary instantly. He ran when he saw me, but I recognized him. It was the old fellow I saw working in the library at the prison. Call quickly."

Jed took up the telephone. "Tell them he ran east toward the main road," said Mr. Sidney in great



"Sick as I Can Be With Pain," Said Jed.

agitation. "He saw me and ran. But I recognized him. There could not be any doubt."

Jed had the penitentiary on the telephone. Yes, a convict, long trusted, had walked out of the prison gates. It was the old man in the library. They were hunting for him—had been for three hours in several different parties—not because they feared to have him escape, but because he would be so miserable and unhappy in the open all night, and, liking him, they hoped to find him and bring him back to shelter. He had no use for liberty; it would only torment and torture him, but some whim—anyway, the old man was loose.

"He's on my place," Mr. Sidney cried to Jed—in a voice I never would have recognized as his. "We can't have convicts running about the place."

They would have him in a few minutes, said the man at the penitentiary, now that they had him located, and he would be as glad to get back as they would be to get him.

That closed the conversation, and Mr. Sidney, with one flash of spirit showing in his eyes, gently and softly collapsed in his chair with a moan.

Jed and I, in alarm, got him to bed.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Dr. Brownell came in the morning and found Mr. Sidney, as was expected, in extreme exhaustion. I explained that our patient had been, as usual the night prior to his alarming collapses, very animated and that after midnight he had stolen out of the house for a walk about the grounds, had encountered a convict escaped from the penitentiary and had come back in great excitement.

Restoratives were given Mr. Sidney, but Dr. Brownell said he responded with more difficulty and more slowly than in other occasions. For several days he lay quite passive, as nearly inanimate as a living person could be. His immobile features, as he lay unconscious, were set; and the expression, it seemed to me, was one of hate, indomitable, steady, enduring hate.

Dr. Brownell came once every three days for two weeks, during which time Mr. Sidney's recovery was painfully slow. His mind cleared and became active long before any strength came back to his body. As soon as his mind did clear, he was, in disposition, his former self. I thought that if such a thing were possible in so gentle a man, he was even gentler than ordinary. I am not exaggerating when I say that the benignity of the man was seraphic.

I thought I saw a change of mood in him. There was, if I was right, a less insistent claim upon life. There was a yielding, an appearance of physical and spiritual acceptance of the law of three score and ten. If I were

not deceived by little and impressive signs I noted, Mr. Sidney was substituting complacently the will to die for the will to live which had been in him conspicuously indomitable.

On Dr. Brownell's last visit, he confirmed what was in truth a fear.

"Has Mr. Sidney, to your knowledge," he asked, "recently found a supreme satisfaction in any event?"

"None that I know of," I said. "Why?"

"He's changing. He is different now from anything I ever knew him to be. I always have believed that his case was out of our province, and that life and death, for him, depended upon resolve and that the resolve had a purpose. You have not found things wholly normal here, have you?"

"No, I haven't."

"There is something here," said Dr. Brownell. "I don't know what it is. You don't know what it is, but depend on it, something of importance to Sidney has happened. It may not have satisfied his life's resolve, but I think it has. For the present, he does not need me—possibly never again."

Jed observed the change in Mr. Sidney. Afterward I knew that he was a much more acute observer than I, for the good enough reason that his observation had a background of knowledge which I lacked. There was, no doubt directly as the consequence of this, an unbelievable change in Jed. He was very fond of Mr. Sidney. In our unhappy experiences with him, we had overlooked this fact and had failed to use it as we could have. His affection for Mr. Sidney was the one thing greater than his cupidity and self-love, with their attendant train of malevolence, violence, surliness, brutality and treachery.

He was convinced that Mr. Sidney was about to die, and the thought affected him tremendously. He became gentle; he abandoned his rasping manner—which, indeed, he never had carried into Mr. Sidney's room, but which was an intermittent provocation elsewhere. He was more than ever with Mr. Sidney, and each evening, after the others had gone, they had a bottle of wine which Jed drank; but he did not go singing down the halls afterward. He was quiet and considerate, courteous to Mrs. Sidney and thoroughly friendly to me.

October went and the brown month of November took even the white-oak leaves, and the woods stood in monochrome. Isobel and I rode every morning, and just before the early sundown we usually took a short walk, to rustle the brown leaves underfoot and enjoy the sweetness of crisp air filled with the odors of a seemly decay underfoot. Soon after sunset we were in Mr. Sidney's room. He greatly enjoyed to have the family about him, not engaged in entertaining him or waiting on him, but occupied in any amusement or work that could be undertaken by his fire.

Jed had a cot moved in and spent the night with him. He did not want the nurses to have this office, and as he was perfectly competent, I consented.

It was an intensely happy and intensely unhappy experience for me. Mr. Sidney, I was convinced, would not live to the hepatica season. Isobel had permitted him to follow the changing seasons from spring to winter by bringing him flowers, and his delight at seeing the first hepatica had been as great as hers in bringing it to him.

Isobel could not realize that her father was dying. No one would have been so brutal as to tell her—or would it have been brutal? But Mrs. Sidney knew, I knew, Jed knew and Mr. Sidney knew—and was happy.

The day before Christmas came with a driving snow which set in with an east wind early in the morning. It was a real Christmas snowstorm, heavy, persistent and driving, but not unkindly.

In the afternoon Morgan of the Metropolitan agency came, driving with difficulty through the drifted banks of snow in the roads, to see me again. I was full of apprehension as I told Jed to show him in. His mood was different from what it had been before, when he almost raged out of the house. It seemed to me every body's mood was changing.

Nevertheless a child's fancy came into my mind. Outside was the storm through which traveled fierce animals of northern forest, and here, out of the storm, came the werewolf.

"Doctor," said Morgan, "we have done a great deal of work since I saw you. I told you we would, because the case interested me. We have traced Mr. Sidney through every known operation and act—so long as we can find him as Mr. Sidney. Every act is honorable; many of them are acts of astonishing charity and kindness. That is so far as Mr. Sidney exists."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Frollicsome Birds and Fishes.

The crane will amuse itself sometimes by running round in circles and throwing small pebbles and bits of wood into the air. Other water-birds can any time be observed at their frolics, cleaving the water or diving after each other.

## MANIAC HOLDS FORT IN TREE

Human Monkey Is Finally Shaken Out by Firemen After Other Methods Fail.

## GIVES PEOPLE SCARE

Insane Man Sleeps in Tree, Chatters to Himself and Apparently Derives Much Pleasure From Impromptu Toilet Aloft.

Denver, Colo.—Fred Burns, an escaped patient of the insane ward at the county hospital, gave residents in the neighborhood of Third avenue and Acoma street ample proof that it is quite practical to emulate the tree-climbing proclivities of the inhabitants of jungle land.

Burns was discovered shortly before eight o'clock in the morning perched in the topmost branches of a tall tree by Arthur G. Seavers, in front of Seavers' home at 345 Acoma street. He was chattering to himself and apparently deriving much pleasure out of an impromptu toilet.

### Spends Night in Tree.

Apparently Burns had spent the night in the tree. He was dressed only in trousers and a shirt, was bare-headed and without shoes. An extra pair of pants and a tattered coat had been pressed into service in lieu of a mattress. He appeared perfectly comfortable in his primeval habitation.

Seavers notified the police. Patrolman Henry Sellers and a squad of assistants were dispatched to the scene. Their efforts for over an hour to coax the deluded man down from his dizzy perch proved futile. They were joined by a hook and ladder company of the fire department. An ambulance was summoned from the hospital.

Fear that any attempt to forcibly bring the man from the tree might cause him to become violent caused the housewives of the neighborhood to be pressed into service. Armed with cups of steaming coffee, griddle cakes, candy, fruit and other tempting food-stuffs they implored Burns to join them in breakfast.

"Not a chance, not a chance," was his reply. "I know you blackhanders and you'll never get me now."

### Shake Him Out.

Despairing of their efforts to induce the man to descend from the tree peacefully, the police and firemen placed a second ladder against the



"Not a Chance," Was His Reply.

tree. Policemen mounted to the top armed with ropes. Burns scampered far out on a limb and amused himself by tossing twigs at passing motorists while plans were made to bring him down.

A net was thrown across the street to break the fall and the rescuers attempted to throw a rope over the body of the "monkey-man." Suddenly he screamed shrilly, threw both hands to the air and leaped.

Burns was safely caught in the net and was not injured by the fall of 25 feet. He was quickly overpowered and loaded into the ambulance and was returned to his cell in the county hospital.

### Died Preparing to Operate.

Springfield, Mo.—Dr. Walter A. Camp, sixty-eight years old, was stricken with apoplexy while preparing to perform an operation on a patient in a hospital, and died a few minutes later.

Judge Rolled Dice With Crap Shooter. Chicago.—"Thirsty" Suidly, negro, crap shooter, lost \$1 and costs when Municipal Judge Stewart rolled the dice with him for a fine in a Chicago court.

## OUCH! SUCH PAIN!

It Takes You Right in the Back!



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MONMANTH, IOWA.—"For over one year and a half I was afflicted with what the doctors called neuritis in both arms, shoulders, back of neck and head. I took treatment from most all kinds of doctors also at the Spings, but I found no relief until I commenced taking Doctor Pierce's Anuric Tablets.



I had not taken them over thirty days until I got relief. I continued taking them for several weeks and am now feeling fine and can do my work without any pain or trouble, altho I am 75 years old."—J. A. Yost, Route 2.



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