

# The Mystery of Hartley House

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By  
**CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND**

Illustrated by  
**IRWIN MYERS**

**CHAPTER XIV—Continued.**

He paused and looked at me as if to see whether he was reaching any hidden spring which if touched and sprung would open the secret. He did not believe I was truthful.

"Mr. Sidney's life is open, honorable and full of nothing but good for fifty years back," Morgan continued. "We have investigated very thoroughly. But fifty years back, Mr. Sidney disappears, evaporates. There is no Mr. Sidney that can be found. We find a young man of twenty, and nothing back of him. There we stop. It is a blind alley. You come to nothing but a wall. That stopped investigation."

"Now, I go a good deal by hunches—call it intuition, guessing, inspiration. It is not good detective method. I don't claim it's good detective work. I never work on a hunch and neglect a rational method, but frequently when I do work on a bit of guessing we get results."

"I've been working, around here, on a guess that was so wild when it first started that it seemed too preposterous even for me. I'll tell you that we are not investigating Mr. Sidney any more. We are looking for another person, and I believe we are going to find him. Then we are going to find some one else. Doctor, I tell you, if you don't know it, as you say, it is the strangest case I ever have known. It is one of hate. Mind, I'm only guessing."

"That touch was so impressive that I betrayed an emotion. He saw it."

"I had you there," he said.

"Mr. Morgan," I said, "you will not believe me, and for that reason it is useless for me to say and keep on saying that I know of nothing here I could help you on. You suggested something to me just now, and you saw that you had done so. But that was because of a coincidence immaterial to what you call a case."

"Very well," said Morgan. "I did not expect to get ahead by coming here, but I want to be fair and reasonable. You do not know anything, but I am not allowed to talk to any one who might know."

"You have talked to Jed," I said. "You cannot reasonably expect to be allowed to annoy the ladies of the house or to flutter the servants. Mr. Sidney is very ill and very weak. Even you would refrain from introducing your case to him if you saw him. If we seem to avoid your inquiries, it is unfortunate. We have nothing to avoid."

"I follow my hunch," said Morgan, getting to his feet. "If I am right, something will be revealed that even I could not compromise. I am afraid you must prepare yourself for some publicity."

"I have told you before that you must select your own course," I replied, and Morgan took his leave, driving away through the snow.

We had our Christmas eve in Mr. Sidney's room. He was very feeble physically and could be raised on pillows in bed but nothing more. But he was the spirit of joviality. He had Jed sit in a great armchair by his bed, and early in the evening he had a bottle of claret opened for him. Nothing would do but Mrs. Sidney and Isabel should have a bottle of Madeira, and I had a whiskey toddy. A great punch-bowl was brought in, and Jed mixed gallons of liquor and many spices in it.

Four of the men servants came in with a great log for the fire, and had



Mr. Sidney Evidently Was Determined to Corrupt the Whole Household.

large cups of punch before they went out. Mr. Sidney evidently was determined to corrupt the whole household. I'll never be able to give an adequate idea of the joviality of that Christmas eve in the sick-room. Mr. Sidney and Jed had conspired for some months to make a festival.

Our dinner, served in Mr. Sidney's room, brought a boar's head, carried by a laughing maid. Wine was sent to the servants. Isabel found a pearl

necklace in what had seemed to be a baked sweet potato. I found a gold watch in a box under a few leaves of lettuce. Mrs. Sidney found merely a note in a bunch of violets which was given her with ceremony.

She read it and had difficulty to remain wholly composed. She arose and went to her husband, taking one of his hands and putting an arm about his shoulders. Then she kissed him and stood a moment before the fire before she trusted herself to come back to the table.

When the dinner was done and the covers were removed, more wine was brought in. A large Christmas tree was lighted, and all the servants were called. Each found a valuable present in the tree; each had punch from the great bowl, and each, coming to shake Mr. Sidney's hand, was given by Jed an envelope which, I learned afterward, contained a hundred-dollar bill.

There was no constraint and no awkwardness such as might mark such proceedings; the people of the house knew Mr. Sidney too well. One of the maids kissed him, and then we had them all doing it.

I was fearful that the excitement would injure him, but he was placid, smiling and happy. When we were alone, we sat an hour by the fire, and then I dismissed every one peremptorily.

Jed, who had been about his duties, returned. The fire was tended. Another bottle of wine was ordered. I had my last look at Mr. Sidney alive as I stood by the door giving Jed his final instructions for the night.

Jed sat in the armchair. All the lights except one by Jed's chair had been extinguished. The Persian cat was stretched by Mr. Sidney's side. The canaries were asleep perched on the head of his bed. The fire was glowing.

"Good night, Mr. Sidney," I said. "Good night, Jed. A pleasant evening."

"Good night, doctor," said Mr. Sidney. "Just a minute, boy. Come here."

He reached out his hand.

"Good-bye," he said.

**CHAPTER XV.**

Mr. Sidney died between three and four o'clock Christmas morning. He passed so easily that Jed, sleeping in the lounge-chair beside him, did not know that death had gone through the chamber until an hour after the event. Jed awakened me. In the case of such an expected happening as this, the perceptions start slowly. The fact that the benignity which so imperceptibly had dominated the house had ceased to exist took hours to assert itself.

Jed was composed when he aroused me. Later, when the sun came up to make radiant all the white witchery the storm left, his sense of loss began to assert itself, and acute as was the grief in the house, none was deeper seated or more profound than that of the rascally old servant.

Mrs. Sidney accepted the event with a serenity which I discovered afterward was born of a long-fixed resolution. For years her life had been a denial of her moral instincts—happy, in spite of that, because of her great devotion to the wonderful man, she loved. The chapters which he dominated in her book were ended. With tenderness she laid them aside.

Isabel did not permit herself indulgence in any weakness. What had happened was written in the contract of life. In later full knowledge of Isabel, I never ceased to admire the wonderful acceptivity with which she met her trials. Nothing came to her with catastrophic shock. She had reality within her vision, and she perceived.

For myself I saw the end of a mode of life which, even when unhappy, had been ecstatically so. My reason for being in Hartley house lay dead in bed.

I should look back, I knew, many times, as a struggling practitioner, possibly in poorer districts of the city, possibly in a small town, to the strange but beautiful time when I was at Hartley. This experience would be only an episode, remaining as the memory of a time when my life halted for a wonderful moment, satisfying, rich and joyful, and—having had this moment—went on in the drab fashion ordained for it. An occasional kindly letter from Mrs. Sidney, or possibly from Isabel, might quicken the memory, but I and this period would fade from their lives as it never could from mine. I should be packing a pill-case on late and unprofitable rounds in that soul-destroying routine with its ceaseless invasion of the intimate personal economies of uninteresting people, abnormally egoistic in the pain of a small or large disorder—the cheerless life of a small physician, serving his useful purpose, I have no doubt, but how little serving his own!

We got through Christmas day in a dazed fashion. The necessary offices for the dead compelled a routine which relieved the tension, although they contributed a dulled terror to the day—those terrible, exacting practical details with which some one in the bereaved family must occupy himself. Necessary details are jocose to the pes-

simist. I know no more comic figure than an undertaker, no more gigantic shaft of human egotism than a tombstone.

Mr. Sidney, we found, had left brief but explicit directions for his burial. This, in the case of a man with life so well conceived, was strange, but his wishes, as we found them, were simple and startling. He was to be buried by the river, close to the pool which had been invested with the added charm of a ghost-story. His grave was to be marked by an unostentatious stone. The inscription was to be as he directed in a note in a sealed enclosure to be opened at the time Mrs. Sidney thought appropriate.

It might be, he had written, that Mrs. Sidney would not want the stone erected during her life. Her wishes were to be consulted. When the grave was marked, if it ever was, the inscription was to be as he directed. Mrs. Sidney, acquainted with the terms of this extraordinary mortuary note, said that it was her wish to have the sealed envelope opened immediately and its instructions carried out.

Christmas night had set in, and the place was a fairyland of glistening white. Far-off church-bells sounded faintly across the snow. In the increasing cold, following the abatement of the storm, timbers in the old house creaked and snapped, and when one of the people of the house, on an outdoor chore, passed within earshot, the sound of footsteps was audible and the crisp crunching which, even as does a high wind, emphasizes the comfort of a secure and warm shelter.

I was in the office when Mrs. Sidney's instructions to open the sealed enclosure were received.

I proceeded to do so. There was a brief note, as follows:

I desire the marking on my gravestone, when it is put up, to read:  
**ARTHUR DOBSON**  
Born May 22, 1840  
Died \_\_\_\_\_

I was holding that document, staring at it, and grasping for elusive threads of perception, when Jed came in. He carried a manuscript in his hand.

Jed drew a chair up to the fire by my side. It was with a strange feeling of relief that I accepted the significance of the manuscript he carried.

"I'm a strange man, doctor," he said by way of beginning. "You'd never understand me. I'm a strange man and I do strange things, I'm going to do one now. I've seemed conscienceless, haven't I?"

"I've never tried to conceal my opinion of you," I said.

"No, you haven't. I like a candid man. That's why I've always liked you, although I can't say much for your intelligence. But you're honest. I'm not honest, but I'm intelligent. I've looked at my life as something to make the best of, and I haven't been foolish about scruples."

"I've managed my chances, and I have not allowed sentimentalism to stop me when something real was to be gained. It's a real world, not a fanciful one. That's the way I think."

"Half the people would be swinging on gallows," I suggested, "if your amiable ideas prevailed generally."

"That's copy-book stuff that's so irritating," he said. "The only thing extraordinary about me is my candor. My ideas do prevail, but the people who adopt them have less frankness. But what I want to say is that I'm going to do a strange thing. You'll probably think it an act of contrition. It isn't at all, but you'll think it so. However, that's unimportant."

"You may not know it, but I was very fond of Mr. Sidney. He was the best friend I ever had or ever shall have."

"Now, I have guarded against acting impulsively or sentimentally. I know I am in an acutely emotional condition. I have guarded against that. I am still considering the world as a real world and myself as a real creature in it. And here's the way I figure it. Mr. Sidney's death has taught me that materialism is not enough. It is necessary, but there is something else. I've got to find another something else. That's more important than any money or comforts—physical—that I can find."

"Where is this something else to be found again if not right here in this family? I have determined to remain in your service after you marry Miss Sidney, and to take care of you and her and Mrs. Sidney. I couldn't leave. The roots are too deep. I could be cut down but not dug up. I'm too old. So as a real creature in a real world I consult my real good, now as always, and I hope I do not seem to you to be acting sentimentally."

"You seem to me to be wholly crazy," I said. "When you speak of Miss Sidney's marriage to me, you are not only ironic; you are cruel. I should think that this particular day might make you at least considerate."

"You're the blindest man I ever knew," said Jed, "but I'm not dealing with what you think but with what I know. I told you once your engagement was an unreal thing and that I did not consider it at all. Later I took that back. Now I can tell you that it is a very real thing, but it is different now with me. I have suffered

a shock. Something's the matter with my world. It is not so bold or confident."

"What I'm getting at is this," I held up the manuscript. "This is Sidney's diary. I have talked to Mrs. Sidney. She thinks, as I think, that you should read it. You'll probably want to confirm what I say. You have to ask Mrs. Sidney. I know you are itching to read it. I also know that if one of your scruples intervened, you'd let your itch go unscratch-ed. But this is what I came in for and here's the manuscript."

"You understand that in giving it to you I surrender unconditionally. I know it, but I want friends. The only one I had is dead; I must make other ones."

The extraordinary fellow shook my hand, left the manuscript in my lap and went out, a more pathetic figure of sorrow than I ever expected to see in Jed.

I went at once to Mrs. Sidney. Jed I said, had left the diary with me



"I Think You Should Read It, John," She Said.

Would it serve any useful purpose for me to read it, or should it not go directly to the fire?

"I think you should read it, John," she said. "I told Jed so. He is very shrewd. His judgment and mine is in this case agree."

I went back to the office, put a log on the fire and sat down to read the diary.

**CHAPTER XVI.**

I shall not pretend to give more than an idea of the manuscript I read there by the fire that night. It was narrative and reflection and contained the story of the life of Arthur Dobson, known to me heretofore as Mr. Sidney. I shall give extracts from it:

"A family is an odious imposition of cruel conventionalities upon individuals who, accepting conventions, however odious and cruel, are helpless. The bond of blood is one no animal (animals being rationalistic) tolerates, even recognizes, but it is imposed upon human beings, who find that the most antagonistic natures must reconcile themselves to an arbitrary rule of life which can come only to hideousness."

"There were in our family two children, my brother Richard and myself. Our parents were the ordinary folk who marry and have a family. My father was an uncommunicative man, whether from a habit of silence or a lack of anything to say, I do not know."

"My mother, as I recall her, was gentle but, I imagine, futile. I think if she had had a chance of establishing a personality my silent, gum father had destroyed it."

"Richard was my elder by two years. My father was wealthy, very wealthy, and Richard and I were not disciplined as to money. My father was not peevish, but I never knew a man who obtained so little good of his money. He had no social instincts; he had no joviality."

"He liked occasional ostentation—a petty form of vanity and egotism. I regarded him, or my memory of him, as wholly detestable—a sentiment which will offend the sentimentally conventional, or the conventionally sentimental. I know he was the last man I would have chosen as a father."  
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Autograph Hunter's Coup.**

Autograph hunting sometimes proves a most profitable pursuit. Ludovic Picard, a French Bohemian of the '50s, made a steady income out of it for several years.

One of his most successful coups was accomplished with a letter in which he posed as "a member of the unhappy race of the unappreciated who is meditating suicide and seeks for counsel and aid in this hour of sore distress."

This drew a number of celebrities, including Beranger and Helne. Lacordaire sent him ten closely written pages, which were promptly converted into cash.

Dickens also fell a victim of his wiles and took the trouble to answer him in French. Eventually Picard was shown up in the press by Jules Sandeau and had to seek another occupation.

**Why the Aspen Leaf Quivers.**  
The aspen leaf quivers easily because it is broad and placed on a long very flexible stalk. The upper part of the stalk is flattened, and, being at right angles with the leaf, is liable to be moved by the faintest breeze.

**COUNTERFEITER AT 92, FEARS PRISON**

Craves Freedom for the Few Days of Life Remaining to Him.

San Francisco, Cal.—"There isn't any place left in the world for me. Even if I did have a long it wouldn't be any use. I'm too near the end." The white head of William Smith, ninety-two years of age, held in the county jail at San Jose on counterfeiting charges, was sunk in bitter grief.

He was ragged and dirty and old. His white hair hung in shaggy, unkempt locks about his pitiful, frightened face. His paralyzed arm in the ragged overcoat sleeve hung limp at his side.

"I have worked for eighty years. My father died when I was two, and at twelve I had to leave school and go to work. I feel as though I had lived for centuries, always toiling."

"I was apprenticed as a carpenter and sent away from my home in Eng-



He Was Ragged and Dirty and Old.

land. I soon forgot what a mother and a home were like. Nothing but work, work, work."

"I came to California in 1866. For a time I worked on Ross' ranch at San Jose. Most of my life here has been spent about San Jose and the bay cities."

"I was not afraid of any tomorrow that might come. I felt I had my two strong hands and could work. But the years went on, and at last I found that the world had little use for its old helpless men. I began to be afraid."

"One morning I awoke in a cheap lodging house in San Francisco. My left arm was paralyzed. I do not know why it should have come upon me so."

"Well, that was the end. I tramped about, grinding scissors. It was all I could do. It is all I can ever do."

"I was old and homeless and lonely. There was little I wanted, yet I could not get even those few things. The bames I tramped by, the people turned me from their doors."

"One day I raised a \$1 bill to \$10. "When I was caught I had to serve a year at McNeil island. Then I was turned out on the world again. What can an old man do? I struggled for a time, then I raised more bills. Even there are nights in winter when I have to sleep out of doors in my ragged blanket."

"If they send me to jail I will die. I am near my Maker, very near. I was treated better in jail than ever before in all my hard life. But oh, I don't want to go back into the jail."

The sad old mouth quivered and the pale blue eyes sickened with fear. "I want to be free," he whispered, choking. "Oh God, every one wants to be free. I don't want to die—in there."

Smith was asked if he would like to be sent to a home, or a charitable institution. This seemed to terrify him as much as the mention of jail had done.

"I am afraid of those places," he said. "I've heard stories that frighten me. I just want to be free. I'm too old for anything else."

When arrested Smith had in his possession \$27, the result of much palstalking work on the part of his one hand.

**Jailed for Kissing.**

Madrid.—A severe reprimand and a warning not to let the misdemeanor occur again has just been administered to a visitor to Madrid, who, when he assisted his wife into a cab at the door of his hotel on the Puerta del Sol, kissed her good-by. A policeman led him off to face his captain, who informed the offender ignorance of the law was no excuse, but that he had violated a law of Madrid which forbids a man to kiss any woman while in the streets of the city, with or without her consent.

**FADING AND DIZZY SPELLS**

The Cause of such Symptoms and Remedy Told in This Letter.

Syracuse, N. Y.—"When I commenced the Change of Life I was poorly, had no appetite and had fainting spells. I suffered for two or three years before I began taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and the Liver Pills which I saw advertised in the papers and in your little books. I took about twelve bottles of your Vegetable Compound and found it a wonderful remedy. I commenced to pick up at once and my suffering was relieved. I have told others about your medicine and know of some who have taken it. I am glad to help others all I can."—Mrs. R. E. DEMING, 437 W. Lafayette Ave., Syracuse, N. Y.



While Change of Life is a most critical period of a woman's existence, the annoying symptoms which accompany it may be controlled, and normal health restored by the timely use of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Moreover this reliable remedy contains no narcotics or harmful drugs and owes its efficiency to the medicinal extractives of the native roots and herbs which it contains.

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Millions of people, old, young and middle age, take them for Biliousness, Dizziness, Sick Headache, Upset Stomach and for Sallow, Faded and Bloated Skin. They end the misery of Constipation. Small Pill—Small Dose—Small Price

**BIG ULCER ALL HEALED**

"Here is another letter that makes me happy," says Peterson, of Buffalo. "One that I would rather have than a thousand dollars."

"Money isn't everything in this world. There is many a big headed, rich man who would give all he has on earth to be able to produce a remedy with such mighty healing power as Peterson's Ointment, to sell at all druggists for 50 cents a large box."

Dear Sirs:— "I was an untold sufferer from old running sores and ulcers. I had tried most everything without any relief from pain. A friend told me of your wonderful ointment, and the first box took away the pain that had not left me before in years, and after using just nine dollars' worth of the salve I am cured. The ulcer was 3 inches by 3 1/2 inches, is all healed and I can walk. Never, never will I be without Peterson's again."

"You may use this to recommend your salve, if you wish. I cannot say enough to praise it." Yours truly, Mrs. Albert Southcott, Medina, N. Y. Mail orders filled by Peterson Ointment Co., Inc., Buffalo, N. Y.

**WATCH THE BIG 4**

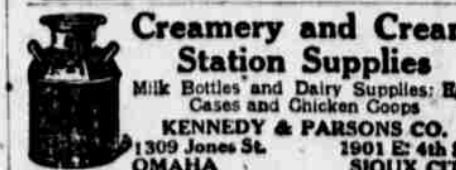
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