

Rainforth's Strange Case.

By WILL LIENBEE.

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CHAPTER I. My name is Hiram Dixon. I am a man past the prime of life and more given to the pursuit of studies that pertain to my profession than dealing in romances, yet I feel that I may be pardoned if in my declining years, when one begins to feel the languor of the autumn of life, I turn for a brief diversion from the dry catalogue of science to a period in my existence which is marked by incidents so strange and romantic as to challenge belief.

By profession I am a physician and surgeon—a plain, practical man, who has found little time to indulge in idle speculations over the marvelous or cultivate a desire to penetrate the veil behind which are hidden strange forces which have for thousands of years puzzled the learned and unlearned of every land. So I shall only record the incidents of my story just as they happened, without any attempt to solve what may to some seem mysterious or reconcile such to the measurement of the rule and line of ordinary practical experience.

I am a childless widower, and aside from what my professional duties entail I mingle but little with the outside world. For more than 20 years I have followed my profession in Mayburg, and I may add that although my income is not what some who are more ambitious might call large I find it sufficient for all my needs.

It was just five years ago that I first met Gerald Rainforth. He was not over 25 at that time and possessed of all the enthusiasm of one who is ambitious and set out to accomplish something in life, yet he was moody at times and would act and talk in the most strange and eccentric manner. Being a painter of more than ordinary skill, he had come to Mayburg to sketch the picturesque scenery to be found in that vicinity. He was rich—so rumor said—and could well afford to indulge his taste for art or whatever struck his fancy or brought him amusement.

He was staying at the Redfield inn, whither I had been called to see a patient, and as I was about leaving he came from the porch where he had been sitting and touched me on the arm.

"I beg your pardon—you are Dr. Dixon, I believe?" he said.

I bowed assent.

He handed me his card and stood watching me in silence.

"Gerald Rainforth," I read aloud, turning my eyes to the young man's face.

"You have heard the name before?" he queried.

"Yes, but it was many, many years ago. While a student at the medical college in New York I met a Horace Rainforth. We became classmates and warm friends."

"He was my father," replied the young man.

"Is it possible?" I said in astonishment. "You say he was your father? He is?"

"Dead—died in Calcutta when I was 15 years of age. A week later my mother followed him to the grave, leaving me with no near relative upon earth. I have heard my father speak of you frequently, and when I came to Mayburg I resolved to make your acquaintance."

"There was something in the manner and frank, open countenance of the young man that impressed me in his favor on the instant. I held out my hand.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance," I said, pressing his hand. "Not merely because your father was one of my warmest friends, but because I think I shall like you."

"Thank you. Then I may come and chat with you occasionally?" he asked almost appealingly. "It is so stupid here."

"I shall be glad to have you come whenever you feel inclined," I replied. And so it happened that our acquaintance soon ripened into the warmest friendship. He came to my office frequently, and we passed many pleasant hours together. I was surprised to find that he had read many odd works on medicine and surgery while in the east, but what impressed me most was his familiarity with curious and abstruse subjects. All the established theories of transcendentalism and occult philosophy seemed to be at his tongue's end, yet he would often smile at the absurdity of them all.

"The theories of these writers are all fog," he once remarked, "simply that and nothing more. They shroud in mystery what they do not understand. Theosophy is but the distorted and imperfect reflection of a great truth whose light is just beginning to cast its first faint glimmer upon the world. The mysterious Tibetan theosophists, the Mahatmas, are a myth—except as they appear in the form of the beggar jugglers and vulgar snake charmers of the orient—and an invention of those who, having caught a gleam of the truth, seek to stir it rather than enlighten.

"But behind all this," he went on in a more serious tone, "are forces that

make themselves felt in us all at times. They come to us in our dreams—in our waking hours—something we cannot analyze, yet cannot deny the truth of its existence."

He had traveled a great deal and had had some strange adventures in the semi-barbarous countries of the east, of which he regaled me with many an interesting tale. But the most romantic of all his adventures had its beginning in Rome. But there, I must not get ahead of my story.

It was on the 10th of September, just three months subsequent to my first meeting with young Rainforth, that a most mysterious tragedy occurred in Mayburg. It was the first incident of the kind that had been known in the history of the town, and it at once excited a feeling of horror among the peaceful inhabitants, which grew in intensity as the mystery surrounding the incident deepened.

An unknown man had been murdered and his body found lying in the road just outside the limits of the village, and within a stone's throw of Darkwood Hall, an imposing but gloomy old building of graystone, whose owner, Isaac Dangerfield, a wealthy New York broker, had never deigned to make it his abode for even a short season.

The murdered man was about 30 years of age and dressed in a neatly fitting suit of dark gray material, but the strictest inquiry failed to disclose his identity. Near him was found a small leathern valise, which contained a few articles of wearing apparel, an opera glass, two French novels and a small black glass jar containing a colorless liquid, which proved to be alcohol. Upon his person was found a costly gold watch and a red morocco pocketbook containing some \$200, mostly in small bills. It was evident that whatever the motive of the murderer had been it had not been robbery. But who had committed the deed? That was the question that was in everybody's month, yet none could offer even a shadow of a solution to the problem.

An ugly knife wound in the region of the victim's heart told that the murderer had done his work quickly and well. A farmer of the name of Marks had been the first to discover the body, which was still warm, and believing that life was not yet extinct he had placed the body in his wagon and brought it to my office, along with the leathern valise which he had found lying in the road near at hand.

Marks was summoned to appear before the coroner at the inquest and gave his testimony as follows:

"My name is James Marks. I am a resident of the state of New York. I am a farmer and reside on a farm three miles from Mayburg. I was in Mayburg on the 10th of September and remained till about 8 o'clock in the evening. I then left by the south road leading to Bartlett's Station. When about a half mile from town and within a short distance of the large stone house that stands near the road at that point, my horse suddenly became frightened at something lying in the road ahead. I tried to pacify them, but they only plunged the more and refused to advance a step.

"I then dismounted from the wagon, and walking a few steps ahead of the team I discovered the body of a man lying in the road. The moon was shining, but the shadows of the trees where I had stopped made it quite dark. I did not see or hear any one near the place. I supposed at first that the man in the road was drunk, but when I took hold of him I found his clothing was wet, and lighting a match I discovered that my hands were wet with blood. I saw the deceased's face by the light. I had never seen him before. The body was still warm. I thought that life might not be extinct, and I placed the body in my wagon and drove rapidly back to town. I brought the body to the office of Dr. Dixon; also a valise which I found in the road near where the deceased lay. That is all I know of the circumstance."

Jack Peters, the old gardener at Darkwood Hall, in whose charge the place had been for five years, was summoned and gave his testimony.

He stated that he lived with his wife at Darkwood Hall. They occupied the servants' quarters in the north wing of the building. He was at home on the night of Sept. 10. He heard no unusual sounds. He was a little hard of hearing. The building he occupied stood about 60 yards from the road and about 100 yards from the spot where the deceased had been found. He had come from his work among the shrubbery at 6 o'clock and had remained in the house till about 8; then he had crossed the lawn to bring a scythe he had left. He was returning with it when he saw a man hurrying across the lawn toward the front gate. He did not recognize the man. He saw his face in the moonlight. It was not the face of the deceased. He did not speak to the stranger. He was surprised at seeing him there, but it was not very uncommon for people to pass through the grounds. He thought he would recognize the man if he saw him again.

The ticket agent at Bartlett's Station was next called and stated that a man answering the description of the deceased had come in on the 4:30 train from the east. He had got off the train there, but the agent did not see which way he had gone when he left the station. The man was a stranger to him. He could not state positively that the man seen at the station and the deceased were the same. There was a strong resemblance between the two if they were not the same.

Several others gave their testimony, but no clue to the murdered man's identity or his murderer was obtained. Jack Peters, the Darkwood gardener, was the only one who gave any testimony that was likely to afford anything like a clue to the murderer, but unless the stranger whom he had seen passing through the grounds should prove to have had some connection with the murder even this would be worthless. A

strict inquiry was made to ascertain who the man was, but all efforts were futile.

The inquest consumed a whole day, but no light was thrown upon the mystery surrounding the tragedy, and the coroner's jury brought in a verdict that the deceased, whose name was unknown, had come to his death by a wound inflicted by a knife in the hands of some one unknown.

The peaceful and quiet village of Mayburg, whose very nature was utterly antagonistic to anything sensational, rarely had its sober dignity disturbed by any unusual occurrence, and, as may be imagined, this startling and tragic event occasioned the most intense excitement. The whole community was shocked and indignant that such a deed could be perpetrated in their very midst and the criminal escape detection.

Keenly alive to the ignominy that the daring deed reflected upon the good name of the town, the mayor called the council together and offered a reward of \$1,000 for the apprehension and conviction of the murderer.

This action resulted in bringing several detectives to the place, who at once set to work to unravel the mystery. Meantime photographs of the murdered man had been taken, after which his body was embalmed and laid to rest in the village cemetery.

On the evening of the third day after the murder I was sitting in my office, reflecting over the incident, when my eyes happened to encounter the valise which had been found with the murdered man. It lay in the corner of the room, where it had been left after the inquest. Moved by a sudden impulse, I took up the valise, and opening it began to examine the contents, with the vague hope that I might hit upon something overlooked by the coroner's jury which might furnish a clue to the mysterious affair.

I first examined the few articles of clothing for marks, but could find none. I then took the three novels and turned the leaves carefully through each one, hoping to find a bit of writing on some of the margins, but not a mark was to be found. Taking up the small black glass jar previously referred to, I removed the glass stopper. Apparently it contained nothing but about eight ounces of alcohol. After a short examination of the contents I was about to replace the stopper when on a sudden turning of the jar a low metallic sound came from the inside. It was evident that there was something in the jar, but peering in through the neck I could see nothing.

I then poured the liquid into a glass, and turning the jar mouth downward something fell out upon the table. I picked it up, an exclamation of astonishment escaped; my lips as I did so. It was a human finger!

I am not a nervous man, and being a physician and surgeon it might naturally be supposed that my experience in the dissecting room and hospital had rendered me indifferent to such sights, yet I must confess that the unexpected discovery of that bit of human anatomy gave me an unpleasant start.

The finger, which was the first of the left hand, was small and shapely and was encircled by a plain gold ring set with a single diamond of rare brilliancy. That the finger was that of a woman was plainly evident by its size and shape as well as the character of the ring it contained. Here indeed was another mystery, even more perplexing than the first, and the more I reflected over the matter the more puzzled I became. It was a strange enough proceeding that the deceased should carry a human finger about with him in that manner, but the presence of the diamond ring thereon served to intensify the mystery that surrounded the whole affair.

I removed the ring from the finger for the purpose of discovering any initials or inscription that might be engraved thereon, but none was found. I had just replaced the contents of the jar, having made no further discoveries, when there came a tap at my office door. Crossing the room, I threw open the shutter and was greeted by the constable.

"I was passing by and just stopped to say that we have arrested the murderer," he said. "I supposed you had not heard of it."

"No. That is indeed news to me," I replied. "Who is it you have arrested?"

"A young man stopping at the Redfield inn—Gerald Rainforth!" was the reply.

(To be continued.)

How to Make Family Sponge Cake.

Six eggs, the weight of four each in sugar and flour. Beat white and yolks separately as light as possible, put the sugar to the yolks and beat again. Add half the flour, heated and sifted twice. Then put in one-half coffee cup of strictly boiling water. Stir hard, add the rest of the flour, with 2 teaspoonfuls of flavoring and a tablespoonful of whisky. Last of all, beat in very quickly the frothed whites. Put at once into pans and bake quickly.

How to Make Rice Flour Cement.

Mix the flour in cold water and let it simmer over the fire. It makes a nice white cement or paste, and if made thick, like plaster, articles can be modeled out of it which will retain polish and are very durable.

How to Clean Copper Ware.

If housewives will rub the copper bottom of their coffee pot, teakettle, etc., with a mixture of buttermilk and salt, they will find it brightens with much less effort than with ashes.

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THE PUZZLER

No. 137.—Crossword Enigma. In cologne, not in rum; In rosin, not in gum; In lobelia, not in tincture; In arnica, not in elixir; In indigo, not in malt; In prescription, not in colic; In aloes, not in glue; In opium, not in bichu; In quinine, not in sulphate; In sodium, not in muriate; In potassium, not in bichromate. My whole is an American city.

No. 138.—Quotation From Longfellow.



No. 139.—Numerical Enigma. My whole, composed of 56 letters, is a quotation from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. My 12, 26, 48, 18, 43, 20, 21, 45, 52, 3, 8, 15, 39 is one of the United States. My 42, 38, 33, 22, 1, 30, 6, 46 is to produce. My 4, 49, 14, 37, 56, 19, 11 is a geometrical figure. My 24, 7, 51, 54, 27, 31, 28 is a grassy plain. My 40, 16, 41, 53, 35, 50, 13 is a Spanish coin. My 9, 41, 23, 5, 47 is having wings. My 32, 10, 34, 35, 39 is a simpton. My 17, 2, 25, 36 is to rise.

No. 140.—Double Diamond Square.

Upper Left Diamond—A letter; the preterit of eat; to remain at rest in an erect position; to finish a letter. Upper Right Diamond—A letter; the goddess of revenge; motionless; a diminutive person; a letter. Lower Left Diamond—The same as upper right diamond. Lower Right Diamond—A letter; a genus of serpents; a dwelling place; a small hooded and poisonous serpent of Egypt and Libya, whose bite is fatal; a letter. Upper Central Cross—A standing without moving forward. Lower Central Cross—A house in which distillation is carried on.

No. 141.—A Riddle.

I am highly prized by my lady, and she allows me freedom which none of her most intimate friends dare take. I am always on the lookout for faults in her complexion, the arrangement of her hair, etc., and when any are discovered I immediately acquaint her of the fact. Such faith has she in my judgment that she always consults me in matters of dress. Strange as it may seem, she thinks the most of me when I cast reflections behind her back. The plainer she is the oftener she consults me, as if hoping I would report of my harsh judgment and tell her she was growing more beautiful, but I always tell her the plain truth and will not be bribed to a falsehood.

No. 142.—Missing Words.

1. "We have met the enemy, and —" Part of the message sent after a famous American naval victory in 1813. 2. "Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of our hearts, no — is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment." Part of a famous farewell address. 3. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are —" Part of a document that every American boy and girl should know by heart. Give (1) the name of the historical document from which the selection is taken, (2) the date and occasion and (3) supply the missing words.

No. 143.—Words Within Words.

An animal within a charm. A portion of a bean within the last part of an ode. An organ within a jewel. An Old Testament character within a New Testament character. A girl's name within a flag.

The Poetry of the Law.

The following story is told of a bench of Scotch magistrates who tried to compose a poetic epigram: Provost Anderson having died, the magistrates determined that the bench alone should supply the poetry for the stonemason's chisel. The senior magistrate wrote:

Here lies Anderson, provost of Dundee, After much effort the next official in seniority wrote his line: Here he lies—here lies he. The third magistrate waited some time until, inspired with poetic frenzy, he added: Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The fourth line was filled in by a battle of few ideas thus: B, C, D, E, F, G.

Properly Equipped.

Toms—How did you ever manage to make love to that Boston girl? Johns—Oh, I wore my heavy overcoat and car muff all the time.

Key to the Puzzler.

No. 129.—Numerical Enigma: Men love in haste, but they detest at leisure. No. 130.—Where is the Dollar? The first lot were not all sold at the rate of 5 for \$2. They sold at that rate as long as A's green lasted, but after 10 sales A's green was all gone, but B has 10 left, which he sells at the rate of 4 for \$2. No. 131.—Fractions: Sugar Bowl. No. 132.—Exposition Puzzle: World's Fair at New York. Centennial of Liberty. Columbian Exposition. ITS SUPERIORITY. No. 133.—A Clever Trick: No answer required. No. 134.—Beholdings: 1. De-Camp. 2. De-Hold. 3. Dis-Arm. 4. En-Rage. 5. Un-Lead. 6. Un-Earth. 7. As-Sail. No. 135.—Diamonds: C A D B M C O L O R P L A C E B A L F O U R M E A S U R E B O R E A C U T E B U E R E No. 136.—Hidden Birds: 1. Ostrich. 2. Pigeon. 3. Pelican. 4. Eagle. 5. Albatross. 6. Snipe. 7. Partridge. 8. Pheasant.

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