

Hollow Ash... Hall

BY MARGARET BLOUNT.

CHAPTER IX.

To walk straight up to the door of a strange house, with nothing but a plaid shawl thrown over your head, requires a considerable amount of courage and nerve. At every step of the way Miss Marjorie's scruples grew stronger—her sense of outraged propriety more clear. At last she came to a dead stop, just as they reached the outer gate of Hollow Ash Hall.

"What is it now?" asked Cowley, patting her hand encouragingly.

"I really can't go in, Charles!"

"Nonsense!"

"They will think I am mad. Only see! I know that my hair is half down and I have no bonnet! Don't make me go there, Charles, till I am more presentable—there's a dear."

"Madam, do you intend to obey your lawful husband or not?" said Mr. Cowley, with mock solemnity.

"But, Charles, do hear reason."

"No, I won't! I've had enough of reason in my life. So come along, my love. The moment you enter yonder door you will get a warm greeting for my sake, and no one will stop to think whether you have a bonnet on or not. But that is just like you women! You can't even die comfortably unless you have a fashionable winding sheet to be wrapped in!"

"Men never study appearance—that is a fact well known!" said Miss Marjorie, quietly. He laughed, and led her up the avenue.

The shutters of the house were all closed, but through a crevice in one of the low windows came a bright line of light, testifying to the presence of its occupants.

"Now look for it! Look as dignified as you can, Marjorie," said Mr. Cowley, and rang the bell.

A light came rapidly through the hall. The door was opened, and a stout female, with a candle in her hand, peered doubtfully out into the night.

"Is it you, master?" she began. And just then catching sight of the muffled figure of Marjorie, she gave a shrill yell of horror and ran away.

"It's our Queen Bess herself, and a tall black man with her!" they heard her scream—and then came a babel of voices from the inner room.

"Shut the door! Lock it! Keep them out!" said one.

"I do wish papa would come! It is too bad to leave us in such a place alone!" sighed another.

"But some one is really at the door," spoke up a third. "It is all nonsense about Queen Bess; I am going to see what they want!"

"Oh, don't, Rose!" cried her mother and sister.

"Indeed, Miss Rose, it is Queen Bess as natural as life!" put in Mrs. MacCarthy.

"Nonsense," replied Rose, and taking the candle she went out to the door with a firm step.

"Who is it, and what do you want?" she asked, quietly.

Mr. Cowley stepped in, and let the light shine full upon his face.

"Don't you know me, Rose?"

"Why Charles—Cousin Charles, can it be you?"

"It is really me."

"But I thought you were in Australia."

"So I was till a few weeks ago. Don't be alarmed, Rose; I am no ghost, but could flesh and blood. And here is some one else, for whom I must crave a welcome—my wife, Rose, whom your servant mistook for the apparition of Queen Elizabeth."

Rose stared, as well she might, when he drew in Miss Marjorie beside him. But Cousin Charles was her great favorite, and she had faith in everything he did—in everybody he loved. So she held out her hand to the bonnetless stranger, with a pleasant smile, and then led the way to the drawing room.

"Mamma, you will never guess who has come!" she exclaimed. "Cousin Charles Cowley from Australia, and his wife."

Greatly bewildered, Mrs. Cowley came forward to welcome her guests. She had the wildest notions about the manners and customs of foreign countries and seeing a tall, stately lady with a plaid cloak doing duty for head and shoulders, as bonnet and shawl, she instantly fancied that it must be the native costume of the land from which she came—the ne plus ultra of all elegance and grace among the ladies of Melbourne and Sydney. It was good to see Mr. Cowley's face as the consciousness of her mistake dawned upon him by degrees.

"Dear me! Charles from Australia, and his wife! My dear, you are most welcome. Will you lay aside your—"

She was at a loss how to designate the article of dress, but finally hit upon the word "burnous" as being the most suitable to the purpose. "Will you take off your burnous, my dear?"

At that Mr. Cowley burst out laughing.

"My dear aunt, it is not a burnous, but an old plaid cloak!" he exclaimed.

"And my wife never saw Australia in her life. She has been living in this neighborhood for more than a year, and I just found her out by the merest chance in the world to-night, and immediately ran away with her."

Every face, even Mrs. MacCarthy's, expressed the most intense interest and curiosity.

"If you will sit down I will tell you the story in a very few words," he observed; and within five minutes he was the centre of a most cosy-looking circle, with Miss Marjorie upon his right hand and Rose upon his left.

"You must all know that my Marjorie is an orphan," he began. "I met her first at a house in London, where, among the gayest of parties, her little pale, sad face caught my eye, and without my knowing it won my heart. It was her uncle's house, but she was not happy there. Her cousins tyrannized over her—her aunt snubbed her—and I soon found that her uncle and myself were almost the only friends she had in the world. No doubt I twisted this fact to my own purpose. I own candidly that I rejoiced when others were rude to her, so that she might see that I was kind. I won her, I do believe, more because she was grateful to me than because she loved me; but the love came afterwards, so that it did not matter. I won her, and made her my wife, in spite of all the sneers of her cousins, and the discouraging coldness of her aunt."

"For a time, we were very happy. Then some unknown correspondent began to trouble my peace. Anonymous letters came to me day after day, which told me that my wife was not what she seemed—that she loved another—that she only waited her time to play me false."

"I was foolish enough to read the slanders—to think of them—at last, to believe them. Circumstances, which looked suspicious then, but which I have seen by a far clearer light since, came up one after another to make me distrust Marjorie still more. At last I felt so convinced of her faithlessness that I deserted her."

"I left a letter saying why I had gone. I left her money, and I have never seen her face from that day till tonight it beamed upon me out of the darkness like an accusing spirit. Aunt—Rose—she has been a school teacher—a governess, a companion, during my absence. But she is one of the best and purest women on earth; and I took her away just as she was, from her drudgery, to come and tell you so. I am sure you will all befriend her. Will you not?"

"Every one of us!" was the hearty reply, and Mrs. Cowley folded the young wife in a motherly embrace, and Rose and Catharine kissed her on the cheek in the most sisterly fashion. Tears stood in Marjorie's dark eyes as they did so; and her husband turned his head for a moment, as if ashamed of the weakness which he could not help feeling and showing at their kindness.

"What the good lady who employs her will say to her elopement, I cannot conjecture," remarked Mr. Cowley after a moment's pause.

"Oh! she never had a very good opinion of me!" said Marjorie, cheerfully. "And she will probably utter a devout thanksgiving when she finds that she is to see me no more. There never was much love lost between us, I am afraid."

"Was she a nice person?" asked Catharine.

"Not according to my definition of the word nice. I can describe her to you in a very short time. She is a stout woman, who thinks herself ill when she is only lazy, and who never gets out of her easy chair except to go to bed or to fly into a rage—which she does on an average of twelve times a day. No—decidedly I do not call Mrs. Magnus a nice person."

"I should think not!" said Rose, laughing. "I wish I could see her face when she hears you are gone!"

"Never mind Mrs. Magnus, now, said Mr. Cowley. 'I want to hear something about my uncle and this mad freak of his. What could have put it into his head to take a haunted house?'"

"Ah!" said Catharine, ruefully; "you must ask Rose that."

"Why?"

"Because she was at the bottom of it all!"

"Is that so, Rose?"

"I am afraid I must plead guilty, Charles. I thought it would be a nice and romantic to live with a ghost. But I don't like it at all. There is a dreadful cradle-rocking in the kitchen every night, and not one of us dares to stop there a moment after dusk. Papa heard it the first night we came, and yet he won't go away. I think he is a little frightened, but he fancies that people will laugh at him if he goes away. And so—"

"And so it will go on till we are all carried off bodily by these horrible cradle-rocking creatures, and then your father will be satisfied," broke in Mrs. Cowley, more in sorrow than in anger.

Her nephew broke out laughing.

"Ah, you may laugh, Charles; but I can assure you it is no joke to live in a place that gives you the cold shivers every time you stop to think what it really is. And Mr. Cowley actually talks of spending his Christmas here! But nothing shall tempt me to stay, even if he does. At any other time I can stand it; but I will not eat turkey and plum pudding in company with half a dozen grown-up hobgoblins to please any man alive!"

"You are quite right, aunt. But I really was not laughing at your troubles, only at your funny way of telling them. But, joking apart, what is this story about a cradle? Because I have

heard something in Australia, which I think relates to this house."

"In Australia? Why, how could any one know of it there?" asked Rose opening her eyes very wide.

"Who owns this house?"

"A Mr. Vernon."

"Exactly so. Do you know what his first name is?"

"Alfred," said Mrs. Cowley. Her nephew looked perplexed for a moment; then his face cleared again.

"Oh, I see! George was his brother. How long is it since they have lived in this house—the Vernons, I mean?"

"Oh, a great many years! Twenty or twenty-two, I think."

"That makes the story clear. You must know that I met a Mr. George Vernon in Australia—a man about forty years old. He drank to excess and gambled desperately; and, in fact, there were a great many queer stories told of him one way and another."

"One night he was in my tent with several of his friends, and the conversation turned upon the reality of ghosts, and the amount of credulity required to believe in them. Vernon said little at first, but later in the evening he suddenly looked up at me and exclaimed, 'It is true, every syllable of it. They do come back. I have seen and heard them, too, by day and night, for twenty years past. They can come in any shape. They can turn their hands to anything. Why, I have known one to rock a cradle four-and-twenty hours without ceasing and sing all the while into the bargain!'"

"What a useful ghost to have in the house with a small family," said some one, laughing.

"I never saw any one turn as pale as Vernon did."

"Useful! You would not crack your jokes about them if you staid a night alone in my old house at Banley," he exclaimed. "Gad! What with the butler's pantry and the turret-room, it's little like laughing you'd feel by morning, I am thinking! Pass me the brandy and let me get it out of my head."

"And sure enough he did get it out of his head; for it took two men to see him safe home when he left my tent at 10 o'clock that night."

"And what do you infer from that, Charles?" inquired his wife.

"Why, my dear, this is near Banley, and the only house that I have ever heard of where a cradle rocks. To make assurance doubly sure, Mr. Vernon's brother owns the place now. I would be willing to take my oath that the rocking of the cradle has something to do with one of these men; but which of the two I am not prepared to say."

"I saw George," exclaimed Rose, who had been deeply interested in the story.

"And I should like to hear the cradle," remarked Mr. Cowley.

"Oh, don't think of such a thing! It's too horrible!" exclaimed both the girls.

"I only want to convince myself that it does rock."

"But we all heard it."

"Then I confess I am like the young lady whose grandmother told her that she had found out by her own experience that love-making was very dangerous work. I want to find out by my own experience, too. Where is this cradle?"

"In the kitchen."

"Does it rock every night?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"It begins about nine."

"And it now wants a quarter to ten. It must be in full swing by this time. Rose, will you do the honors of the ghost to your old friend?"

"Not I."

"Catharine?"

"I must beg to be excused."

"Well, aunt, will you come?"

"No, Charles; I'll never set foot in that awful kitchen again, by day or night, while I have my right sense."

"Then I am sure that good servant of yours—"

Mrs. MacCarthy shrieked a quick denial before he had time to finish the sentence, and Rose laughed.

(To be continued.)

CUT OFF HIS WOODEN FOOT.

Man Caught in Trap and No One to Help Him.

John McLeod of Milford, Me., employed as a scaler on the lumbering operations in township 31, had a strange experience recently. He was caught in a bear trap, and was obliged to cut off his foot with a jackknife. Fortunately, he had a wooden leg, and the operation was not painful. He was going from one landing to another, and thought to cut off part of the distance by taking the bank of the Athabasca stream. And he got into a bear trap, which closed upon his wooden leg with a snap, and held him in such a way that he could not reach the springs to release himself. The spot was far from the camps or logging roads, and John was in quite a predicament. But the situation was joyful even compared with what it might have been had he been blessed with two good legs, or even if he had been caught by the other. As it was, he whipped out his jackknife, and in a short time had whittled himself clear, leaving a considerable portion in the trap. This he got out without much difficulty, and, taking it under his arm, with the aid of a stout stick as a cane hobbled to the camp. But Mr. McLeod has bitter thoughts and is very angry with himself. After he had told the story to the crew the little French "cook" observed: "Why you no take off your whole wood leg—ah? You get out um trap, and no spile you wood leg 'tall—ah? It never occurred to John that he might have unstrapped his wooden limb, and when he thinks of it he grits his teeth and carves away the more vigorously upon the new leg he is making."

A STROLLING SINGER.

(By Charlotte Becker.)

"He sang along the woodland paths When all the world was warm and gay. The birds half mocked him overhead. The shadows cooled his greenish way."

"The earth was sweet with growing things. The vintage promised full and fair; And one with eyes like larkspur buds, And garnered sunlight in her hair."

"Stood watching by the flex trees, A glow, a welcome in her eyes. He sank, too tired, at her feet. And smiled through wistful little sighs."

"Dear love," he said, "I cannot live, I shall not see the morrow's sun, But I am fortunate to die While yet my loving is not done."

"And weep no foolish tears for me, But when the vines with gold are hung— Think, 'Life was very good to him, For he had lived, and loved, and sung.'"

—Anais's Magazine.

A Coincidence and a Reconsideration.

BY J. P. COUGHLIN.

(Copyright, 1901, by Daily Story Pub. Co.)

Paul Westover had every reason to congratulate himself upon the success of his new book. The public received it with gratifying approval, and the critics bestowed upon it well-tempered commendation. Being a first-born, however, the critics felt bound to patronize both it and its writer in their customary paternal fashion, and while lauding its other excellent qualities they pointed out and dwelt upon the un-realistic improbabilities of the main incidents in which Mr. Westover's heroine was centered.

That this should be so was only natural: Mr. Westover was ridiculously young to know anything of the impenetrable feminine, and yet he had dared to make "Gertrude Warner" the story of a woman's life, a story of many strange phases, and of curious thoughts into the workings of a young girl's mind.

Westover was almost on the point of accepting the critic's dictum. He had fancied that his portrayal of Gertrude Warner was well and clearly imagined, but after all what could he, a bachelor and impressionable, know of women. The reviewers must be right. Gertrude Warner was falsely drawn.

But there was at least one person who did not think with the reviewers. The newly-fledged author received in his mail from his publishers a long letter that was truly startling to his self-possession. Its full length may not be given here but its gist is contained in a couple of paragraphs.

"You are evidently very intimately acquainted with the story of the darkest passages in my life, but surely it was unnecessary that the details should be made public so faithfully and so callously. I would like to think that your story was purely a coincidence and evolved entirely from your own imagination, but the details up to the denouement, in every particular, are so carefully true to fact that I have no other course than to believe that some unworthy recipient of my confidence has in an idle moment betrayed my unhappy history."

"Doubtless you will admit that I have at least the right of asking an explanation, the more especially, seeing that you have even given to your novel a title so like the name borne by her who asks it."

"GERMYN WARREN."

Westover finished the reading of this letter with a rue expression. He whistled softly to himself and looked blankly at the wall in an endeavor to collect his thoughts and adequately consider the situation presented to him. In a moment the humorous aspect of the affair dawned upon him and he laughed quizzically.

"One of the delights of novel-writing," he murmured aloud; "is to run across some hysterical woman who finds your book a mirror of her past."

matrimony until finally he went to bed convinced if not exactly pleased.

His encounter with Miss Gerymyn Warren, and the train of thought it prompted may have had something to do with Mr. Westover's departure for the west, but the literary journals announced his trip as taken for the purpose of acquiring local color for a new novel.

During the two years that followed Paul Westover's literary output served to increase considerably his growing reputation. He returned to New York and prepared to settle down comfortably to meet the demands made upon him by his publishers. The novel, to prepare which he left New York, was a pronounced success, and though his old friends, the critics, did not appear to notice it, Paul himself was conscious of a certain resemblance in type between his new heroine and his old, that is to say Miss Gerymyn Warren. He tried to reason that this new heroine was simply but a development of the Gertrude Warner of his first book, and thus he tried to dispel his lingering fears that he had drawn upon Miss Warren, his acquaintance of a single evening.

Again in his career Mr. Paul Westover had an encounter which caused him to become as discomposed and nervous as he had been at his first meeting with the coincidental heroine of his first book.

It was at a literary reception.

"Permit me, Miss Warren, to introduce to you Mr. Paul Westover—you have, no doubt read his clever books."

"Yes, everything Mr. Westover has written," said Gerymyn Warren, as she extended her hand to Paul, who stood bowing and blushing like a schoolboy. Then with a smile of gentle mischief playing around her lips as they were left alone she continued: "And I cannot think that Mr. Westover has forgotten me since some of my friends would have it I am portrayed rather faithfully in your most recent novel and even in several of your magazine stories."

Westover was plainly surprised at this frank challenge, and for the second time in his life he found himself keenly observing the heroine of his fiction. He noticed the same clear, blue eyes and wondered at how closely he had remembered them all this time. He found himself on terms of old acquaintanceship with this magnetic little girl, for she was only a girl. For a moment until the presumption of the thing struck him he felt a tinge of regret being taken away from New York for so long. How that evening's reception passed he never knew. He had a very definite notion that he had spent by far the greater part of the evening in the society of Miss Warren.

That night in the seclusion of his chambers, over his cigar, he came not unwillingly to the conclusion that after all:

"What is to be is to be, and it seems to me that the fates have ordained that I should create a heroine for myself. Either I am in love or am drifting reluctantly towards that happy state of mind. Of course marriage is the to-be-expected outcome of love, and for a young man struggling for fame and fortune a sympathetic wife is a great helper, a constant incentive—and thus he proceeded to adapt his views to the altered state of his circumstances."

"Who is This Tennysson?"

When Tennysson was nearing 60 years of age, and his fame might fairly be assumed to be world-wide, Edward Moxon, the publisher, decided to approach Gustave Dore and commission him to illustrate the "Idylls of the King." After Dore had considered the proposals, he asked: "Who, then, is this M. Tennysson?"

musically in upon his semi-absorption; "Is there are some things in your book I would like to talk to you about. May I?"

Westover found himself in a quiet corner of the drawing room, anticipating a quarter of an hour's stern cross-examination at the hands of Miss Warren. Somehow the ordeal did not seem to be so terrible as it would have seemed two days previously.

Sitting in his armchair that night Paul Westover meditatively addressed the smoke-clouds from his cigar.

"She is wonderfully pretty—she has exquisitely sweet eyes and what a charming talker, even though we did talk only of the serious things of life. She is indeed an ideal heroine—in real life."

Westover pulled himself up abruptly and laughed a quick, nervous laugh.

"Come, this won't do—contemplating such a thing already is making haste too quickly—but that's absurd. Why before I know it I'll be thinking of marriage. And marriage would be the ruin of a young writer. It would—"

But then Westover repeated to himself all the familiar arguments against

matrimony until finally he went to bed convinced if not exactly pleased.

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THE LIVE STOCK MARKET.

Latest Quotations from South Omaha and Kansas City.

SOUTH OMAHA.

CATTLE—There was a fair run of cattle and the demand from packers being in good shape the market ruled active and full steady all around on anything at all desirable. The bulk of the receipts were again composed of beef steers, about seventy-five cars being included in the offerings. Packers started out early and paid good, firm prices for the more desirable bunches. The common kinds, however, were rather neglected and in some cases sellers found it difficult to get steady prices. There were only about fifteen cars of cows and heifers on sale, and as buyers all wanted a few it did not take them long to clear the pens. The market could best be described by calling it active and steady to strong. There were not many stockers and feeders offered and the demand for them was a little better, so that anything desirable was picked up early at good, strong prices. Stock calves were ready sellers and the prices on that class of stock have improved considerably this week.

HOGS—There was a heavy run of hogs and as other points reported a drop in prices the market here opened 7 1/2¢ lower. The bulk of the early sales went at from \$5.32 1/2 to \$5.37 1/2, with the choicer loads selling from \$5.37 1/2 to \$5.42 1/2. The hogs began moving toward the scales at an early hour, and it was not long before the bulk had changed hands. The light-weights, however, were very slow sale and bids ranged from \$5.32 1/2 down to \$5.25.

SHEEP—There was a heavy run, but the bulk of the receipts was composed of Colorado lambs, about 45 cars being included in the receipts. Packers did not seem to be at all anxious for supplies this morning, and as a result the market was very slow, and up to a late hour but little stuff had changed hands. What did sell brought just about steady prices with yesterday, the 35 lambs of yesterday bringing the same price today. Sheep were also about steady but slow.

KANSAS CITY.

CATTLE—Native and Texas steers, steady to 10¢ higher; cows and heifers, stockers and feeders; steady; native beef steers, \$4.75 to \$5.00; mostly \$4.90 to \$5.00; stockers and feeders \$4.25 to \$4.50; western-fed steers, \$4.50 to \$4.75; Texans and Indians, \$4.25 to \$4.50; cows, \$3.50 to \$4.00; heifers, \$4.00 to \$4.50; canners, \$2.50 to \$3.00; butts, \$3.00 to \$3.50; stock bulls, \$3.00 to \$3.50; calves, \$3.00 to \$3.50.

SHEEP—Market 2 1/2¢ to 3¢ lower; top, \$6.00; bulk of sales, \$5.50 to \$5.75; heavy \$5.00 to \$5.25; mixed packers, \$5.50 to \$5.75; light, \$5.00 to \$5.25; pigs, \$4.00 to \$4.50.

SHEEP AND LAMBS—Sheep, steady; lambs, 5¢ lower; western lambs, \$4.50 to \$5.00; western wethers, \$4.25 to \$4.50; western yearlings, \$4.50 to \$4.75; ewes, \$3.50 to \$4.00; culls, \$3.00 to \$3.50; spring lambs, \$5.50 to \$6.00.

GOOD EFFECT IS EXPECTED.

Aguinaldo's Address Will Have Proper Influence on Filipinos.

WASHINGTON, April 29.—It is believed by the administration that the manifesto of Aguinaldo will have a decidedly good effect in the Philippines and in this country. It will take some time for its dissemination among the Filipinos, but it is expected to be of considerable service and to make more rapid the change in the situation which set in some time ago and has become quite marked of late.

Especial gratification is felt at the unreserved tone of the document and the full acceptance it indicates of American rule. This, it is felt, will bring to the support of the government many Filipinos who, wishing peace, have hesitated to assist the Taft commission. In this country it is expected to reduce the criticism of the administration and to cause less discussion of the general policy of the war.

The islands and more consideration of the important matter of the best administration to be evolved for their government. It is to this work that the Taft commission is now bending all its energies.

Aguinaldo, now that he has accepted American sovereignty, probably will be given more liberty than he has enjoyed hitherto. His services will be used as far as possible in the pacification of the islands. The extent, however, to which he will be permitted his freedom is for General MacArthur to determine, with the assistance of the Taft commission, for the aim of the home government here will be to