

The MYSTERY of HARTLEY HOUSE

by Clifford S. Raymond
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A SPANISH SAILOR

Synopsis.—Dr. John Michelson, just beginning his career, becomes resident physician and companion of Homer Sidney at Hartley house. Mr. Sidney is an American, a semi-invalid, old and rich and very desirous to live. Mrs. Sidney is a Spanish woman, dignified and reticent. Jed, the butler, acts like a privileged member of the family. The family has come from Montevideo, South America. Hartley house is a fine old isolated country place, with a murder story, a "haunted pool," and many watch-dogs, and an atmosphere of mystery. The "haunted pool" is where Richard Dobson, son of a former owner of Hartley house, had killed his brother, Arthur Dobson. Jed begins operations by locking the doctor in his room the very first night. Doctor John fixes his door so he can't be locked in. He meets Isobel, daughter of the house, and falls in love at first sight. In the night he finds the butler drunk and holding Mrs. Sidney by the wrist. He interferes. Mrs. Sidney makes light of it. John buys a revolver. John overhears Jed telling Mrs. Sidney he will have his way. In reply she says she will not hesitate to kill him. Mrs. Sidney asks John to consent to the announcement of his engagement to Isobel. The young people consent to the marriage. Later they find it is to be head off Jed, who would marry Isobel. Jed tries to kill John, but the matter is smoothed over. John, though "engaged" to Isobel, conceals his love. Mr. Sidney visits a nearby prison and has Dobson, the murderer, pointed out. Jed tells the story of the Dobson murder. The family goes to South America for the winter. John is left at home, but the "engagement" is not broken. John hears the story of a tragedy "that might have happened in Montevideo." The family returns. A mysterious Spanish sailor appears.

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

Jed may have suspected I carried a pistol. I had no more than caught a glimpse of his white, alarmed face when he sprang at me and grabbed at my hip pocket. I had a pistol in the pocket at which he reached, but I intercepted his movement before he got the weapon.

"Let me have it," he begged. "Just a minute!"

I got a hold of his wrist, which stopped him, and he whimpered. Then he broke away and showed himself at the window. At this the man on the lawn smiled with a jousness that was a triumph. He indicated in a flash that he had found what he had sought. He smiled so that I could see the white of his teeth. He had been uncertain and puzzled when I first saw him looking up at the windows of the house. With Jed framed in one of the windows, he was triumphant and rejoicing. Whatever he wanted he had found something which pleased him.

Jed was furious, the more furious because he was helpless. He would have murdered the man on the lawn if he had had any means of doing so. He was so furious that he did not care how he revealed himself to me.

The man on the lawn stood laughing for a moment and then walked slowly



But I intercepted his movement before he got the weapon.

away toward the brush, into which he disappeared. Jed hung out of the window watching him.

"Well, sir," I said, "I think we have you under a real restraint at last."

"I was mad that the fellow should have come up to the house that way. Some tramp!"

"And you dropped the coffee-tray and tried to get my pistol. A perfectly natural proceeding on seeing an unknown tramp!"

"We don't want strangers about here," he said.

"You don't want that man," I said. "And he is not a stranger. When he saw you he smiled as if he had found what he was looking for."

Jed was unhappy and showed it.

"I wish you were a friend, doctor,"

he said. "I try to make you one. I will get you your coffee."

He sent in a maid to sweep up the breakage from the coffee-tray, and presently he came with another pot and cup. He had steeled down, but was not tranquil.

"You know that man," I said, "and you wanted to kill him."

"I never saw him before," he said.

"You have had some sort of dealing with him. He has been hunting for you. He has found you. I think we are going to find you more interesting, Jed. The man will remain in the neighborhood; I think you are going to have some unpleasant hours. The thought does not make me unhappy."

"I wish I could find a friend in this house," said Jed.

"I wish you could deserve one," I said.

My description of Hartley house has been so sketchy and indifferent that it may not have included mention of the formal gardens which took in the river side of the place. They were charming at all times but particularly so at sunset, when the radiance was behind the western hills two miles across the water and was reflected in the clouds back over our own eastern hills. The shore at this point was narrow, and the river was wide. Hills, river and bottom lands formed an intimate sanctuary which evening glorified.

To the north the gardens terminated at a high brick wall against which hollyhocks grew and now were in gorgeous blossom.

Jed had joined me in the garden, and we were sitting on a stone bench facing the river not fifty feet from the brick wall and the hollyhocks to the north. Jed was expected within a quarter of an hour to join Mr. Sidney. He seemed dejected and worried—in a fashion timid, I thought.

When he came to sit down beside me, I resented the intrusion for a moment; but knowing that he had only a few moments in which to impose his presence upon me, I did not make him feel any more unwelcome than ordinarily he knew himself to be.

A schooner deep in the water with brick front up the river had just come in sight around a point above, and with sails spread to the light wind was caught in the glorification of the water. A catbird was hopping in and out of the shrubbery, and even with Jed by my side I was sentient and content.

It was not a noise that attracted my attention. It must have been the sensation of being stared at. I turned my head toward the wall to the north. In line with the bench on which we sat, and just topping the wall, was the head of the Spanish sailor.

He and I looked at each other for what seemed to be at least a moment. His earrings glittered. His gaze was steady and both inquiring and purposeful. Even in inquiry it seemed malignant, with the malice which comes from a sense of injury.

I felt a decidedly unpleasant shock with the creeps which come from a good ghost story. If he had appeared suddenly at full length somewhere in the garden, walking about, it would have been different. But just his head appearing above the wall, and he perfectly unexpected, unexplained, motionless and inquiring—it gave you the shivers of a child frightened at night in the nursery.

"You're poor company," said Jed, "but I am, too, and I have to go to Mr. Sidney."

I seemed not to hear him. It was not intended to rebuff him; I was held by the Spaniard's eyes. Jed went in to a huff and said: "Oh, go to the devil."

Then he also turned and saw the head above the wall.

He arose and stood looking at the Spaniard as intently as the Spaniard was looking at him. This situation lasted a full minute, without a movement or word from one of us. Then the Spaniard's face, graven in lines of malevolent purpose, softened into a smile which expressed satisfaction with prospects. And then the head disappeared suddenly. I was in doubt whether the man's feet had gone out from under him, or whether he had jumped.

In disappearing he left the place where he had been, charged with the mystery which his presence had indicated. His disappearance intensified, thickened, the atmosphere which his presence had created. While his head was above the wall, the sensation was one of nervous astonishment. When his head disappeared, the suggestion of terror was added. So long as we saw him, it was something unexplained but embodied; when he dropped out of sight, it was as if a person going down a hall in his house by candlelight at night were to come upon a startling sight, and—at the moment when his perceptions and reason were struggling to explain the subject and its presence and to sustain his courage—the candlelight should go out in a gust of wind and leave him blind, facing a thing he had not

explained and now could no longer see. Then, with cause, may the hairs crowning even a head with a thinking brain arise in sheer fright. The person's plight is that of black ignorance, in which superstition and childish fears ascend and dominate.

Jed took a step forward as if in pursuit, but stopped with that one movement. It broke the situation down and made it possible for me to return to animation. Seemingly my powers of movement and speech had been suspended. I looked at Jed, who was as pitifully frightened as a child in the dark. He made every demonstration of fright except wailing. Then he braced himself, recovered his courage and without saying anything went into the house to join Mr. Sidney.

CHAPTER VIII.

When I saw Mr. Sidney that evening he made a remark in joke that Jed was ill and needed my attention. "I have not had the usual satisfaction of my wine," he said, "and I know it is because Jed is not in condition."

"I'm not well, Mr. Sidney," said Jed. "I didn't want to say anything about it, because I didn't want to interfere with your evening, but since you mention it, I'll admit it."

"Go on along then, Jed," said Mr. Sidney. "Go and have the doctor look you over."

"I'm not sick," said Jed almost angrily, "but I know I'm bad company. I'll go to bed."

"There's something wrong with the man," I said as Jed left, "but it isn't physical."

"So I imagined," said Mr. Sidney. "He's as strong as an ox. He's got the constitution of an onion. However, he's not himself tonight, and that's all there is to that. Will you read to me?"

It was eleven o'clock when I went to my room. I was glad of my release, although it had been a pleasant



Just Then I Was Blinded by the Light of an Electric Flashlight Hitting Me Full in the Eyes.

evening. For a dead or a dying man—for a living and live man, for that matter—Mr. Sidney had extraordinary manners and great charm. He gave a dignity and worth to life by his very manner of leaving it. In going from it, he proved it to be worth while—which, I suspect, is the highest accomplishment of the real gentleman.

After I had gone to my room, I found myself restless and thought I might find rest in a walk. I expected to be joined by my friends the mastiffs and Alredales as soon as I was outside, but not a dog appeared. This was enough to be noticed, but not enough, at the time, to be given significance. I walked about for a while and re-entered the house with quieter nerves.

I found that I was tired. Ordinarily I liked at least an hour's reading just before bed, but this night I wanted sleep.

I was grateful for the mood and the opportunity, and I yawned once or twice as I got into my pajamas.

I do not know when I went to sleep or how soon thereafter I awakened. It was possibly only two hours later. I did not look at my watch, for the very good reason that other things at the time were more important. A bright moonlight was shining, and whatever had awakened me, the moonlight showed me good cause to be awake. In a window which the moonlight touched with full, illuminating force was a face recognizable as that of the Spanish sailor.

Again only his head was visible, but this time he was in my bedroom window and seemingly trying for entrance into my room. This may seem a morbidly proceeding than his appearance above the wall early in the evening, but really it was not. I had the shock of unpleasant astonishment, but I felt, to my satisfaction, the ability to handle the situation. I was not frightened by the appearance of the head in my window. I suppose it is because the appearance suggested burglars, and burglars are conventional.

I lay quietly in bed and wondered how much more than the head I should see. Just then I was blinded by the light of an electric flashlight hitting me full in the eyes.

A second later the flash was gone, the face in the window was gone and a slight movement on the gravel below showed me that my visitor was gone. I got up and looked out. Although the lawn was bright in the moonlight, no one was to be seen. The Spaniard had disappeared into the woods. To come to an understanding of the

sailor's acts, not much reasoning was needed; it was not my room he was trying to enter, but Jed's. His flashlight had not only shown that I was awake but that he had the wrong man, and he had climbed down and run into the woods. One mystery was how he had escaped the dogs.

That was explained the next day; they had not been loose the night before; had not been released from their kennels. They were found restless from an unexpected night of confinement. They had not been out because the stableman who had charge of them had spent the afternoon and night in the village of Hartley, drunk.

It was an extraordinary and not an ordinary proceeding for this stableman, who had been a dependable character. It did not require much suspicion to conjecture that he had been tampered with in deliberate purpose to free the grounds of the dogs for the use of the Spanish sailor made when he climbed up to my room.

The stableman, proved delinquent, was so apparently contrite and innocent that it would have been an injustice to punish or discharge him. He had gone to the village in the early afternoon on an assigned mission for the house. He had used the opportunity to drink a few glasses of beer, for which proceeding no one would blame him in Hartley house. It seems that he drank two or three glasses more than he intended to and, even beer being in a fashion intoxicating, got into a condition which made him amiable to the approach of a stranger who succeeded in interesting him in the immediate prospects of life, which then to him were chiefly alcoholic.

He and the stranger had much talk and many drinks. The stableman lost all sense of responsibility, which was not strange, and proceeded from beer to strong liquor, forgetting all his duties to the house. In consequence he did not get home that night, and the dogs were not loose.

Naturally one drew a direct line from this performance to the appearance of the Spaniard at my window, and there was natural wonder as to what kind of confederate the Spaniard could have so effectually to prepare the way for him.

The Spaniard had a confederate who was ingenious and resourceful; that was evident. He had made a deliberate play to get the dogs out of the way the night the sailor made his attempt to get into Jed's room, and had succeeded in almost getting into mine.

Two days after the strange appearances of the Spaniard, I was asked for and was told that a gentleman desired to see me. I went to the office of the house and saw a man who instantly suggested the one who had entertained the stableman so successfully.

He was so easily described that it was a crime for even a drunken stableman to have missed his distinguishing characteristics, but at that, the stableman had made identification possible. The moment I saw the fellow I thought we were nearer the solution of the mystery of Hartley house.

He was a significantly insignificant-looking man; that was his identifying mark. He seemed timid and insecure of himself, apologetic for his intrusion upon me and withal determined to do whatever it was that was in his program. I wondered how so shrinking an individual had played a jovial part in a village tavern with yokels at drink. His card indicated him to be a lawyer and gave his name as Phil- etus M. Brown. He came directly to his subject—for which I thanked him—as soon as he had made a brief preliminary of commonplaces of introduction and greeting.

"I have asked for you, doctor, because I know of no one else here who will serve. I do not wish to approach Mr. Sidney directly and cannot trust the factotum you know as Jed. I would not impose upon Mrs. Sidney or her daughter except in extremity. You are here, a rational human being and interested. I am informed, in the fortunes of this family. Therefore I have come to you."

"For what purpose?" I asked.

He smiled as if to apologize for having any purpose, and pulled at the cuffs of his coat.

"I'll be frank," he said. "I hardly know the purpose clearly myself. My client is a sailor. My practice lies considerably along the water front in the city. It has not made me rich. I have lost a good deal of egotism and have become pragmatic. I have to get along and to deal with facts. There are people dependent upon me, and I have not been much to depend upon."

"The condition of your finances or your morals cannot be of interest to me," I said. "What have you that is of interest?"

He smiled as if he was used frequently to rebuff.

"What I have, I assure you, humiliates me to present, because I realize that if I succeed for my client, I shall be in the way of blackmailing Mr. Sidney. My consolation is that I am only an agent and I am sure that I shall be a more considerate and honest one than any other this ignorant sailor would find. It has been necessary for me to know many languages to make my small living. My Spanish client does not know much if any English. He has been a man of precarious manner of living, and it seems that several years ago he was in the employ of Mr. Sidney."

Babe's Appeal Touches Father. New Castle, Pa.—Contentment prevails in the home of Betty Jane Reno, and her brothers, Jack and Ralph, at New Castle, Pa.

Mr. Reno, who was in Cleveland, read Betty's letter to the paper, and was touched by the appeal. "I was just going to work," he wrote home to his wife, "and saw Betty's letter in the paper. I simply couldn't work. I had no idea how the kiddies would suffer."

He forwarded a money order with the letter, and stated that he would return and "play square" with the family he had deserted.

No wonder Jed is worried.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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TRAGEDY TURNS INTO ROMANCE

Chief Figures in Sensational Episode in Chicago Are Quietly Married.

COMES AS SURPRISE

Man and Woman Were Prominently Mentioned in One of the Most Remarkable Tragedies of the Year—Both Exonerated.

Chicago.—Ruth Wood, twenty-five-year-old bookkeeper, who was found leaning over the dead body of Samuel T. A. Loftis, wealthy diamond broker, in his palatial North side apartment, was married two weeks later in Waukegan to Roy M. Shayne, advertising salesman, whose name was linked with hers in the widely heralded tragedy.

The marriage comes a surprise to both relatives and friends of the couple. They made no announcement of their intentions, but slipped quietly from the city.

The first announcement came in a telegram to Miss Wood's mother: "We are married. Both very happy. On our way to a quiet resting place," the message read. It was signed "Roy and Ruth."

Romance Old—Yet Young.

The romance of the pair is scarcely two months old—and yet has lasted over a decade of years. Then Roy Shayne was manager of his father's business, the John T. Shayne company, dealers in furs. Ruth was a typist, barely out of school. She worked for the firm and Shayne became attracted to her.

Later she left his employ and for ten years did not see him. Then, some weeks ago, the fates which had decreed their participation in one of the most sensational "stories" of the year brought them together again. They met at the Edgewater Beach hotel, where Ruth was employed.

Shayne became devoted to her, and met her daily at her home. He introduced her to Samuel T. A. Loftis,



Leaning Over the Dead Body.

wealthy diamond dealer. That night they announced their engagement at a dinner given by Loftis.

Girl Met Loftis by Appointment. Six days later Loftis called Miss Wood at the hotel.

"Come to my apartment. I want to talk to you about Roy's future," was his message. Miss Woods went. Loftis met her at the door dressed only in pajamas. Drinks followed. Five hours later Shayne, awaiting her arrival at her mother's home, received a phone call. It was Ruth.

"Come and get me. I am at Loftis' home! And hurry!" was the message. Shayne went.

An hour later officers came rushing to the house. Loftis lay dead on the floor. Shayne was awaiting. Miss Wood had fled.

Shayne refused at first to tell her name—but finally consented. Both were arrested. Both were grilled. Both obtained "scarce heads" in the papers and both faced the searching glances of officials and spectators at a coroner's jury. Their story was a 24-hour sensation of Chicago. And both were exonerated.

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CANADA'S HARVEST IS OVER

Thrashing Shows Increase Over Expected Yields.

The Winnipeg Free Press of a few days ago contained a cartoon of which the following is a copy:



This probably as much as anything else will give some idea of the state of mind of the Western Canadian farmer, as he watches the tally from the thrashing machine while his wheat is being carried to the elevator.

From all sections of the country, the most optimistic reports are received, the local and city papers are filled with reports from twenty to thirty bushels of wheat to the acre, while in some places oats are showing a record of as high as 120 bushels to the acre.

Referring to Saskatchewan, it is confidently expected that the wheat yield will be nearly 125 million bushels. Heavy rains which fell in districts that did not promise so well in July, had greatly improved the prospects there, and there is no question that paying yields will be produced. The yields in the eastern part of the province may not show to the advantage that will those of the western part, but too much cannot be said of this, for it is the results as they come from the machine, and often these prove happily deceptive.

There is now every reason to believe that the wheat crop of the three prairie provinces will approach 250 million bushels.

Alberta will exceed the 70 million bushels that had been looked for. The average yield will be considerably higher than it has been in the province in any of the last four years. The Department of Agriculture in a recent report gave the opinion that it cannot fall below twenty-two bushels to the acre, and that it might easily pass the twenty-five bushel mark. Most of the wheat in the province when the report was written, stood well up to three feet high, and on some fields was still higher. The report goes on that in parts of Southern Alberta forty and fifty bushels to the acre yields will not be uncommon, while there will be a good many yields of from thirty to thirty-five bushels to the acre.

In the northwest part of the province, in the country surrounding Battleford and adjacent to the Canadian National Railway line to Lloydminster, and south the crops are excellent and the yield will be heavy.

A larger than average wheat crop is being thrashed in Manitoba. It has been estimated that the total yield of the three provinces will not be less than 225,000,000 bushels, and it may be that somewhere between 250,000,000 and 300,000,000 bushels will be the final figure.

Oats is a good crop in all three provinces. This crop has also grown rapidly during the last two or three weeks. Excepting from those fields which were sown late for green feed, the yield will be heavy and the grain excellent. Barley and rye are above the average. There was sufficient help to harvest the crop.—Advertisement.

Sign of Prosperity. "So you regard the advance in railroad rates as a sign of prosperity?" "Assuredly," answered Mr. Dustin Stax. "A public that can afford to meet the new charges cannot possibly be other than prosperous."

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