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# Hoodooed For More Than A Century by the Uncanniest of Spooks

*Will Washington's Commercial Club Break the Chain of Horrors Which Makes Its New Home a Place of Dread—or Will It Add New and Weirder Links?*



The Daughter of Baron Rosen, Whose Nerves Were Wrecked by the Weird Sights She Saw While Living in the "Hoodoo" House.

THE most implacable of spooks, with a terror-inspiring record covering a century and a quarter—almost the whole existence of the National Capital at Washington—has been boldly challenged by the Commercial Club of that city. They have bought the land which reeks of murder, suicide, deaths by fire and mysterious infection and the uncanniest ghostly visitations that have ever figured in ghostly history, and are spending \$120,000 to convert this awesome spot into a cheerful centre of Washington club life.

Although three separate buildings have successively taken the place of the lonely cottage where, in 1792, the record of horror began, the ghosts have remained with the land. They rendered uninhabitable even the present handsome mansion which Baron Rosen occupied with his family, during his period of service as Russian Ambassador. The wife of Bakhmetieff, the Baron's successor, a Washington girl, familiar with its history, would save none of it. It has remained vacant and avoided—for the daring members of the Commercial Club to reconstruct and occupy, while the older generations of Washington society await with shivery confidence the resumption of the spook's blood-curdling activities.

This persistently haunted spot, latterly known as the Tyler house, is on the south side of Farragut square, almost in the centre of that fashionable residence district. On the same spot stood the mansion occupied by Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy and his family during the Harrison Administration. The Tracy servants were frightened out of their wits by the ancient spook's malicious activities. The climax of horror came with a conflagration in which Mrs. Tracy and her daughter lost their lives. But these ghosts, which had remained with the land—although the cottage of their origin still stood, moved out to the junction of the Brightwood road with Mount Pleasant—proved themselves fireproof.

To be readily intelligible, the story begins with the building of that fatal cottage back in 1792—coincident with the earliest work upon what, during a century and more,

has developed into the finest legislative structure in the world. The builder of the cottage was a young English stonemason employed on the Capitol foundations. He built it with his own hands to be a loving welcome to the blue-eyed, golden-haired woman whom he had summoned to join him in his now prosperous state from across the sea.

The beautiful, golden-haired bride came, and was enchanted with the home prepared for her. When he left home in the morning with his heavy stone-chipping hammer and his kit of tools, she walked with him among the roses to the gate and kissed him goodbye. She was there to meet him on his return at night—often with her great masses

of sunlit hair floating about her graceful form. Those of his fellow workmen who were permitted to visit at the cottage did not wonder at the husband's adoration. But they did not realize that the demon of unreasoning jealousy was harrowing him into insanity, that he was conjuring up all sorts of injuries to himself during the long hours when his treasure was alone in the cottage. Cunningly he concealed his jealous madness from her. No suspicion assailed her when he returned one afternoon earlier than usual with the tale that the night watchman at the Capitol was ill and he must serve in his stead. Having finished his supper, the stonemason kissed his wife, took up his kit of tools and was off. Until some time after dark he remained away, then, with swift and silent footsteps, he returned to find the cottage dark with closely shut blinds. But from between them streamed out from the sitting room a narrow bright ray. On the instant, with every magnified jealous fear augmented he rushed noiselessly up the steps, on to the side porch and, giving the Venetian shutters a quick turn he gazed full into the brightly lighted room. What he saw Heaven only knows—or if, indeed, he actually saw anything at all more culpable than his wife entertaining some caller. Whatever it may have been, real or fancied, the sight turned him frantic. He snapped the shutter asunder, raised the sash and valuted into the room. One glance at her husband's face revealed to the poor young wife that murder had possession of his heart, and that night but light might save her. With the fleetness of the hunted deer she sped up the steps toward the second story where, at

Ex-Secretary of the Navy Tracy, Whose Wife and Daughter Were Burned to Death in the Hoodoo House.



the distraught youngster rushed to the cottage and told his story, wildly accusing his companion of being the cause of his ruin. Then he blew out his brains and fell a corpse at her feet. It was in Winter, and snow lay deep over the roadways of the city. As the servants rushed with blanched faces into the room they saw their mistress in a dinner gown, with thin slippers, standing motionless, gazing at her lover's corpse. A moment later, brushing past the agitated onlookers, wending the air with her shrieks, she rushed into the night. For days she was a wanderer, with reason completely gone. When finally she was discovered, lying exhausted on the frozen ground,

stage window opening outward. Closely fastened for the night, she could not open it before the madman, rushing close upon her heels, caught and held her relentlessly. With his stonemason's heavy hammer he literally crushed out her life. This done, seizing her by the long bright hair he had so adored, he dragged her down the steps and out of the front door, down through the rose garden, over the muddy road and into the thickest of the belt of woodland, which later was to form the delightful old garden of Corcoran house, on which now look out the windows of the former Army and Navy Club and the Rochambeau apartment house.

Then he wandered away, no one knows where, to be gone for several years, until lured back by some awful instinct to the scene of his love and happiness—and frantic crime. Not for some days was the murder discovered; not until friends got to call found the house open and deserted, with a trail of blood down the stairs, across the threshold, and here and there still in horrible little pools along the roadway to the woodland where the mutilated body was found. When, later, the stonemason was taken into custody he made no denial, but with horrible frankness gave every revolting detail of the wanton murder for which he was summarily hanged.

For years the cottage with its rose garden and the Nubian blackamoors standing guard at the gate stood idle—a haunted house, shunned by all in daylight as in darkness. Then suddenly one sunshiny morning the place was opened up as if by magic and workmen completely removed the disorder into which through the years of abandonment and neglect, it had fallen. It was a quiet neighborhood with few curious ones to make inquiry even then—a retired spot selected for this very reason by the wild young son of a wealthy Congressman wherein to luxuriously establish the beautiful young woman with whom he elected to set up his household gods without benefit of clergy. A fast life the young couple led—a life of drink and card playing, in which the gayest of the gilded youth about town uproariously took part. A fast life it continued until the merry pace came to a sudden standstill as the young fellow, in order to pay a so-called debt of honor, forged for a large amount the name of his father's dearest friend. The friend sought him out and confronted him at the club with his crime.

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she lived but a few hours and died without uttering a word.

Many years went by, years in which the charming honeymoon cottage stood deserted and shunned. Then one fine day the property was purchased by an army officer, Colonel Bacon, who, having married a Miss Stoughton, of Washington, was fully aware of what he was doing. With the true military spirit of hitting at the root of things, Colonel Bacon announced that the cottage was for sale at a ridiculously low figure, and a purchaser having been found who undertook to put it on wheels and move it far away to the junction of the Brightwood road with Mt. Pleasant, where it now stands intact.

Again Washington society stood agape, propounding the query, whether the curse went with the house or remained with the land. Colonel Bacon and his wife, building themselves a handsome house on the haunted site spent a number of happy years, until, being ordered away just as the Harrison administration began, the moment was auspicious for leasing the house to Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy.

With the awful tragedy of the Tracy fire, which resulted in the burning of the Secretary's wife and daughter, and of the latter's maid, the whole world is acquainted. Every monarch in Europe gave sympathetic recognition in telegrams which literally showered upon the stricken head of the United States Navy.

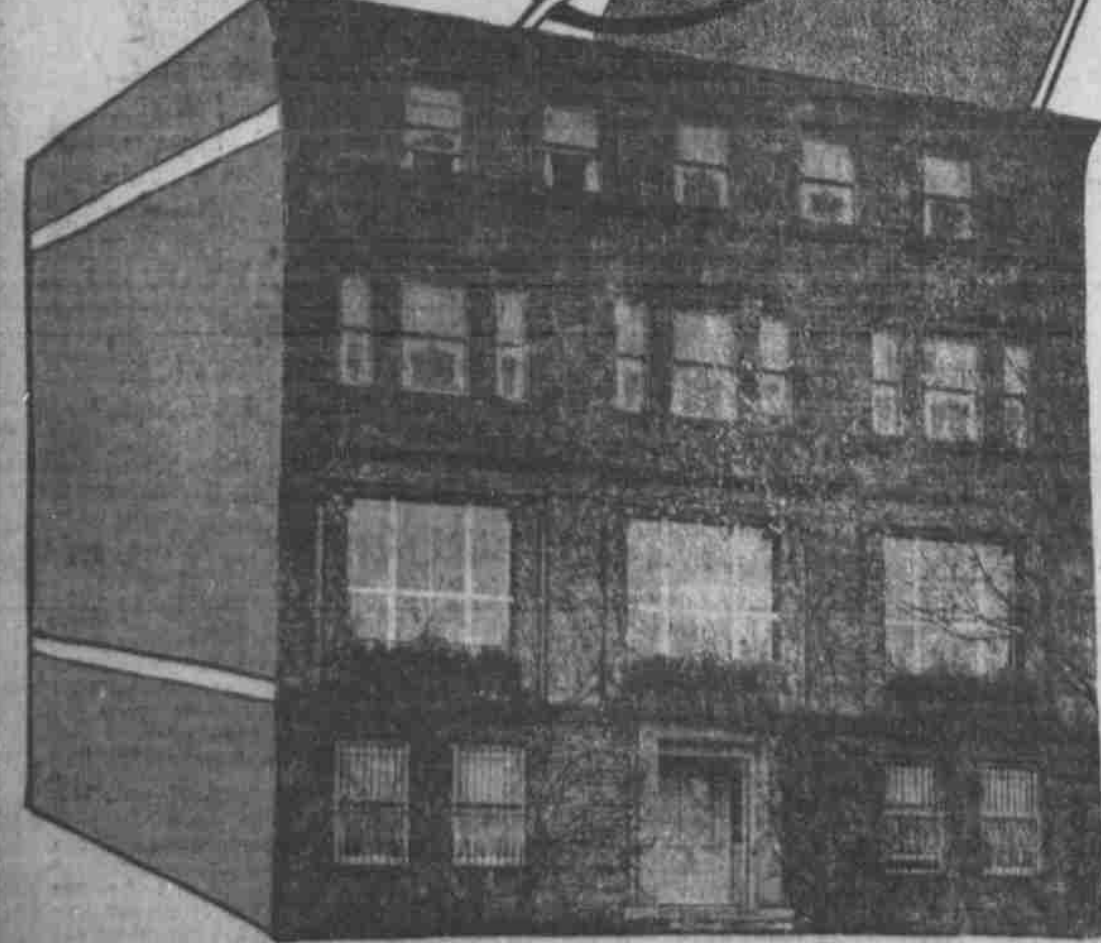
That was the last sacrifice of human life upon that fateful spot. When later the Augustus Cleveland Tylers bought the property, and tearing down every trace of the fire-scarred house, built the splendid mansion which the Commercial Club has just purchased for its future home, every one regarded them as brave indeed, and looked for something tragic to mark their occupancy.

No sooner were the premises in order and the family arrived than the place was ordered under quarantine by the Health authorities, as one of the maids had contracted scarlet fever. As she was a faithful creature, Mrs. Tyler would not hear of her being taken to a hospital, but installed her in the upper story. This ended the Tylers' hopes as entertainers. No one cared to visit the "haunted house."

The Tylers began to be bored to death. After a couple of seasons they moved away "for good and all." This evacuation was followed by a series of occupancies by wealthy people, all more or less known. The Seth Barton Frenches established themselves there immediately after their marriage, and Mrs. French, fresh from a long residence with her parents in Greece, gave some delightful illustrated lectures in the grand salon, which, overlooking Farragut Park, will undoubtedly be the



Mrs. Seth Barton French, Who Escaped the "Hoodoo" by Hurriedly Leaving the Haunted House.



Washington Commercial Club's New Home, Situated on a Spot Which Reeks with Tragedy and Has for Years Been Haunted by the Uncanniest Ghostly Visitors.

"The Fire in Which Mrs. Tracy and Her Daughter Perished Left the Ghost Unscathed."



favorite lounging room of the Commercial Club. But the ghosts so demoralized their servants that they had to give up the haunted residence. When the Bakhmetieffs were appointed to succeed the Rosens it was generally supposed that as the Russian Embassy is still unfinished that they would lease and occupy the Tyler house on Farragut Square. But no, Mrs. Bakhmetieff, being a former Washington woman, and having spent all her girlhood in the old Decatur house on Lafayette Square within a stone's throw of the Tyler house, would have none of it. Had not the nerves of Baron Rosen's daughter been wrecked there? The membership of the Commercial Club is over five hundred. Will habitation of the ghostly premises by such numbers, will the gayety of modern club life banish the wraiths of the murdered stonemason and his beautiful wife? Washington is awaiting with interest the answer to that question.