

The Mystery of Hartley House

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ISOBEL!

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. 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.

CHAPTER II.

That evening I had dinner with Mrs. Sidney and her daughter Isobel. I had been in the house twenty-four hours and did not know there was a daughter until dinner brought the three of us together.

Mrs. Sidney was Spanish. She was a lovely woman, gracious and charming, but I thought there was a great deal of steel hidden in her disposition. She did not seem to expect to find it so soft or to expect to find it so hard. She had a Roman dignity of self respect which did not, I could be sure, permit mourning. It would not have taxed any one's perceptions to recognize in Mrs. Sidney a human being living an extraordinary life. The fact was so apparent that it seemed a part of her personality.

It must be remembered that I had come to Hartley house prepared for abnormalities. There was first, the man with the wonderful will to live which had interested Dr. Brownell. There was the alien beauty of the house, the strange servant Jed, the haunted pool—insignificant as it was, to a rational being—the lovely woman who was so apparently a tragic figure. There was the fact of my being locked in my room the first night. There were the forbidding defences of the place—walls, dogs and keepers. I may be excused for taking a fanciful view of my new surroundings.

Then there was Miss Sidney—Isobel. She came into the dining room an unexpected if not astonishing phenomenon to me, who did not know that there was a daughter in the family.

Mrs. Sidney presented me. "How do you do?" said Miss Sidney, and she seemed to find it tiresome that a stranger had taken a place at the table.

Jed served us, and the dinner was excellent. Although the ladies had only a glass of sherry each, I was offered a variety of liquors. My habit is abstemious except upon rare occasions, but I was so embarrassed by Miss Sidney's boredom that I took two glasses of champagne, and they made



She Seemed to Find It Tiresome That a Stranger Had Taken a Place at the Table.

me a more tolerable dinner companion. It was some champagne stimulated remark on feminism which caused Miss Sidney to stare at me as if I were an animal which, being smooth skinned, suddenly had grown a coat of fur.

She stared for an instant and then laughed. She was quite frank. She had been bored; she had become interested. I could see that she disapproved her mother. Mrs. Sidney, any one could know, held to conventions as the salvation of life; Miss Sidney did not.

Isobel Sidney was a very attractive girl. I guessed her age to be twenty-three. I also guessed that candor and honesty were outstanding points in her disposition. Her youth and her beauty were magnetic, and I must confess that your romanticism was touched instantly. I had seen just enough of Mr. Sidney to understand how this girl could be the daughter of Mrs. Sidney.

By the time dinner was over we had found a pleasant agreement in ideas and taste. I was in an ecstasy, full of

the sensation which comes to a diffident man, unaccustomed to women, when he dares to think for the first time that he has been interesting to a young and beautiful girl. It is one of the Elysian emotions. We grow old and bald, and women are adventures dismissed from our lives. We know we do not interest them. We do not think of interesting them. We become pantalooned lay-figures too scared of scandal or too confirmed in propriety to break out of the narrowed way. There is an age which comes to a man, a condition in which he finds himself, to which he submits if he have any morals, and when it comes and when he submits, the gates are closed upon fanciful romantic adventures. If he has been fortunate, he is content. He sits at the west window, and his prospect is the sunset. He no longer asks the great question of youth: "Could I make that girl like me?"

To me, after that first dinner with Mrs. Sidney and her daughter, the ecstasy was a romantic folly. Isobel had captured me, my sense, my rationality, my judgment, my mind, fancy and emotions. Beauty and youth alone are enough to do this for an imaginative young man, and when attractive aspects of character are back of beauty and youth, and when the young man looks forward to a probability of that conquering circumstance, propinquity, he may be excused if his feet lightly touch the floor. I was captured and knew it after that first dinner—knew it, and both loved and dreaded it. I was about to make a fool of myself and be at once a happy and a miserable fool.

In the exalted state of egoistic emotions which I have outlined, I went to Mr. Sidney's room after dinner and sat with him for two hours. I began to appreciate how charmingly his life was decorated. A really rare subtlety of art was used to bring a warm color into this indomitable but feeble man's winter of life. I did not fully appreciate until later what thought and care lay behind the unstudied comforts and sensations Hartley house offered.

Mr. Sidney was white haired and very gracious. His manner was a warm cordiality. It was not precise. It was robust, but it was benignant. Later I saw how his presence pervaded the place.

We had a cheerful talk. What he said suggested to me that my world could not have been more than a hundred years old at the most, and that his included the period of inorganic evolution in which the period of organic evolution is but a pin prick. Youth is startled by such conceptions of life, but I had an interesting evening.

Before I said good night, Jed came in with two bottles of wine. He stood and looked at me unpleasantly. I arose to go, and Mr. Sidney said:

"I think we shall like each other. At least, I hope you will be comfortable, even happy. And don't be distressed about the wine. I don't drink it any more. Jed drinks it, and I enjoy seeing him do it."

A whippoorwill was reticent in the woods at night, and its call came from dark recesses odorless and mysteriously veiled. Having said good night to Mr. Sidney, I had gone to my room with a book from the library. The night was fresh, sweet-smelling and cool. I had read for several hours when I heard the cut bolt in my door thrown against the piece of metal which had been left in the socket.

There was no transom above the door, and evidently the threshold kept light from appearing beneath it. I had been reading, as I said, for three hours at least, and whoever tried to bolt me in had good reason to think I was asleep.

I knew who the person was. It was Jed. Knowing I was not locked in, I was undisturbed and continued reading.

Shortly afterward I heard a woman's voice in expostulation far down the hall. It arose abruptly to a sharp cry, and I had to lay aside my book and expose the fact that my door was not locked, a thing I had not wanted to do until the secret of its being locked could be discovered by revealing that it was not.

I hurried out and down the hall. Jed had a woman by the wrist. Both of them saw me coming. She released herself from his relaxing grip by a quick jerk and ran. He stood until I came up.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"What makes you think anything is the matter?" he asked.

"Don't take me for a fool," I said.

"That was Mrs. Sidney who screamed. You were holding her. It seems to me it needs an explanation."

"Who are you that you need an explanation?" said Jed.

"You are drunk again."

"I know I am. If that's satisfactory to my employer, why should it bother you?"

"I doubt that it is satisfactory to your employer that you should be making his wife scream at midnight. Look here: you're a servant in this house. What have you to say for yourself? I'm going to have an explanation of this."

Jed had been surly and angry, but now he grinned.

"All right," he said, "but if you want to be decent about it, ask Mrs. Sidney first whether she wants your help and your asking. That's my advice, young fellow. And while we're asking, how did you get out of your room? You're not supposed to be out. We don't want people in this house running around the halls at this time of night."

"I opened the door and came out. Why shouldn't I come out? I heard a scream and came."

He looked at me as if he were doubting himself. I think he was uncertain whether he had thrown the bolt or not. It transpired later that I was right, but for the time I was wrong.

When I went back to my room, I was restless, as one naturally would be, if stranger in so strange a house. It was impossible to sleep and difficult to read. I sat by the window and alternately dozed and read until day broke and the woodthrush began to sing. Then, quieted, I went to bed and had two hours' sleep.

I thought it wise to speak to Mrs. Sidney about the incident of the night. She had seen me, she knew I had talked to Jed, she might or might not know that I recognized her. I might add to her perplexities by speaking to her, but I might obtain an insight into matters which would enable me to act discreetly and usefully. If I remained ignorant of motives prevailing in the house, I might at any time blunder into a serious mistake. It seemed best to speak to Mrs. Sidney.

I could see when I spoke to her, she had been greatly disturbed, but she was Roman.

"It was nothing serious or important, doctor," she said. "I'll not say that it was pleasant or that I liked it, but it had no significance. Jed is a faithful and invaluable servant. He has a vice for which he is not responsible. He was a perfectly sober man when he came to us, and if he isn't now, it is our own fault. My husband corrupted him without intending to do so. My husband, when he was well and strong, loved to drink wine. He drank it in great quantities and without any disturbance of his sobriety or good nature. It mellowed and at the time intensified life for him. He cannot use it now, on account of his health, but he enjoys seeing the use of it, and Jed has been made the victim of Mr. Sidney's vicarious enjoyment. Jed is not always considerate of his position when he is not sober, but he never is dangerous, not even when, like last night, he is exceedingly annoying."

I admired the lady's resolution and fortitude, but I did not think she was telling the truth—not all of it.

"That was the first time anything of the kind ever occurred," she said.

"I am sorry it disturbed you. I met Jed in the hall. He was not sober, and he had a preposterous request to make. When he has spent such an evening with Mr. Sidney, he resents being a servant in the family. He wants to be accepted as a member of the family."

"I have had something to do with that," I suggested.

"No doubt it has inflamed his egotism to have you enter the family. The situation with him is difficult. His pride was hurting him last night. He had lost all sense of proportion. He was like a child. He remonstrated with me; he was too important as Mr. Sidney's cronies to a drunken mood, but he forgot himself and grasped me by the wrist. I had been trying to control him and restore his common sense. Then I became indignant, and you heard my voice. I am afraid it was shrill, but I was not alarmed. I was merely indignant."

"You speak of Jed, Mrs. Sidney," I said, "as if he were merely an annoying alcoholic, tolerated when he is annoying, because of his general usefulness but that does not explain why he tries to lock me in my room while he is sober and before these disturbances begin. That shows design and intent to have a free hand when he makes the disturbance. I do not like being locked in my room."

"It is outrageous," said the lady nervously. "I did not know that it was done. I shall see that it is not repeated."

"I am not so sure you can," I said, "and I wish you would not try. I have protected myself against it, and I'd rather Jed did not give me any more thought than he thinks is necessary now."

"I am sure, doctor," said Mrs. Sidney, "that you will understand Jed and the situation better when you have been here longer. It may be annoying to you now, but we all here live for the pleasure and comfort of Mr. Sidney, who is worthy of all we can do for him. He did everything he could for us while he was active, and if thoughts would benefit us, he would be working for us now."

Mrs. Sidney was determined to protect the secret of the situation, and I had no right to cross examine her. The next time I went to town I bought myself a forty-five caliber pistol.

Although I was prepared for recurrent disturbances, there were none. Within a week I had found my way into a pleasant routine. Jed seemed to be conscious that he had over-

stepped his bounds. He was not apparently contrite, but he was cautious. A week was without incident. Then Miss Sidney went away to make a visit. Her absence was a spiritual disaster. Ecstatic and morose youth! The beauty of Hartley house became a hollow and dark melancholy, making sad sounds. Vibrant life had gone from it. Its perfume was lost.

I cannot now tell quite what it was that made Hartley house, a place so comfortable and genial, at the same time a place so threatened. The threat could not be ignored: it was there. The story of the ghost at the haunted pool could have nothing to do with it. The threat had tangible aspects. Mrs. Sidney's worry, unspoken but graven in her resolutely Roman face, was one evidence. The extraordinary behavior of Jed was another. The atmosphere of the place was one of mystery.

During the pleasant, peaceful, odorless summer months, when our life was one of undisturbed routine, I never escaped the sense of dread. I hoped the intangible would take shape; surely something intangible that would be embodied, hung over the house.

I may not be able to make this certainty appear so vividly to you as it did to me. It permeated; it was in the atmosphere; it hung over the woods. It filled the house. It came with the odors of blossoms; it was expressed in the summer winds; it was threatened



She Had Been Greatly Disturbed, but She Was Roman.

In the lightning which flashed over the river, I could not reconcile this effect to such a cause as that feeble ghost story of the pool. I could not dread that ghost or feel its presence. It was a benevolent ghost needed for decoration.

I asked the people of the house, the servants, and found that for them it was largely a superstition. They all had been brought from the city, and only a few, such as Jed, a gardener, the housekeeper and the cook had been long enough in the house really to be associated with it.

Jed was the only one that willingly would be in the vicinity of the pool at night. The others might laugh at the suggestion of terror, but they would not willingly test their superiority to superstition. If they had been really frightened, they could not have been kept in service. They were not. The place was large, comfortably inhabited and genial. There was a touch of dread at one spot. They avoided the spot, and it was negligible so long as they did avoid it.

In the small town of Hartley there was more of the legend than there was at Hartley house. To the people who lived at a distance and came in contact with the place only on occasions, it had an alien, exotic air. Mr. and Mrs. Sidney had come from South America, from Montevideo, where they had lived many years. The circumstances of their selection and purchase of the place were normal, but the villagers spiced a great deal of gossip with notions of the alienism, wealth, aloofness and odd habits, concerning which gossip ran from our servants to the Hartley householders.

I have mentioned that my first morning at Hartley house a gardener asked me to see one of his children, which had a bad cough. The man had a good deal of sickness in his family in the next few months, and I was of considerable service.

"I shall not hesitate to kill you."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Varnish to Imitate Ground Glass.

To make a varnish to imitate ground glass dissolve 90 grains of sandarac and 20 grains of mastic in two ounces washed methylated ether, and add, in small quantities, sufficient benzine to make it dry with a suitable grain, too little making the varnish too transparent and an excess making it crapy. The quantity of benzine required depends upon the quality, from one-half to one and one-half ounces, or even more. The best results are obtained from a medium quality. It is important to use pure washed ether, free from spirit.

Safeguarding the Goat.

In Switzerland the goat is placed ahead of all other animals. If a boy plagues a goat he can be fined and sent to prison. If a person meets a goat on a path and drives him aside he can be arrested. If a goat enters the yard of a person not his owner, and is hit, the person guilty must pay a fine.

LINEN IS USED IN NEW UNDIES

The land is allagog with sales of white, which means that the summer underthings are upon the counters in great multitude, observes a fashion writer. Have you ever tried to buy lingerie during spaces between these sales of white? And have you met discouragement because there was so little choice? Well, the lesson learned by experiences of this sort is to wander forth at the white time of year and to do your buying then, for you will find the wares of the world presented for your selection.

The materials now are inferior to those of some years ago. Now we see blooming under the \$3.98 sign post an array that would have formerly been relegated to the basement. The dealers have announced that they are pushing domestic underclothes because of the scarcity of French and Philippine stocks, and so we see cotton crepes and muslins of none too dainty a quality and our imaginations picture the thickness, of them as we, perforce, bid goodbye to the thin silk and muslin surfaces to which our pampered skins have become accustomed.

Fine Apparel Expensive. However, once the situation has been studied, we find that we need not at once join the ranks of the wearers of heavy, muslin underwear unless we be so inclined. There are ways to dodge around these counters of thicknesses and paths that lead to more attractive displays, though the result brings ever the inevitable conclusion that much money is needed for a respectable looking wardrobe.

The chiffon and silk lingerie is more daintily made than ever before and more originally conceived. But it looks as though the fine French underwear made of dainty nainsook or handkerchie linen were wedging its way to the foremost ranks. During the war we were deprived of this type of undergarment, but it is, after all, the most attractive sort of lingerie and, slowly but surely, it is marching to leadership. More importations are being made every day. One buyer of French lingerie made the statement that the French were repeating their former achievements and that they had no thought for anything new. Well, if the pure delicacy and charm cannot be improved upon, then we are thankful enough for the things as they exist!

Among the many bridal trousseaus that have been purchased during the last five months, muslin undergarments have held the vote of popularity. Silk things there have been, of course (they are too beautiful to be ignored), but the thin muslin and linen things intricately hand-made have received new attention, so the dealers in these things say.

Lace in the Limestone.

Lace is being used more and more conspicuously for underclothes. You will say that this has been done since the beginning of things, but this new lace is of wide bands and is used in great abundance. One sees the finer sorts of handmade laces inserted in medallions on the new undergarments. There are lace panels for chemises; lace edgings, five, six and seven inches in depth, put on in slightly ruffled



Accordion-Plated Handkerchief Linen Chemise in Pale Violet Embroidered in Pink and Blue.

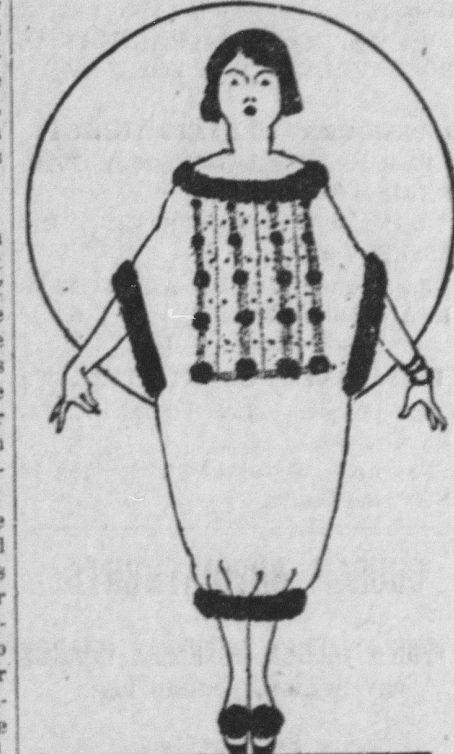
founcings; real lace tops for camisoles and chemises; lace sleeves and yokes for night dresses; lace in every conceivable usage.

In fact the newer night dresses are so elaborately done and so bedecked with wide and expansive trimmings of lace that one can scarcely distinguish them from the prevalent negligees. There are linen night frocks trimmed with Irish lace and laces of other expensive and real varieties. One had a yoke and sleeves of Chantilly with a wide band to make the hem of the garment. It was as beautiful as anything which has ever been shown in the way of lingerie and surely marks a return to the lingerie that was done in the trousseaus of our grandmothers. The silk and chiffon nightclothes

have not diminished in beauty nor in quantity, and in spite of the fact that we hear how scarce these materials have become there seems to be every evidence of plenty of "silk underclothes for those who can afford them. A new set of chiffon underwear was trimmed with satin bindings of narrow ribbon pinched over the edges and many streamers of the same color of ribbon (the sets were made in many colors) streaming from the places where the ribbon was used to tie the garments into place.

Absence of Buttons.

There seems to be a welcome absence of buttons on all of the newer underwear. More and more the designs appear with rubber bands and loosely tied ribbons to hold them in



New Negligee With Marabou Trimming and Embroidered Stitches in Wool.

their proper positions. The easier they are to wear the less will we resent the cost.

Tailored underwear has come into favor recently, and there is, in consequence, much of that variety of underwear to be seen. There is much to be said in its favor, for there are many women who, in the daily course of their lives, cannot stop to fuss with ribbons and laces and rosebuds. Still they cling to that tendency which is their right—the love of dainty, soft and luxurious underwear. It is here that the tailored silk underwear comes into its own.

Following the pattern of the single piece men's underwear there have been some things like this designed for women's wear and they have won a real response. They are made of fine qualities of silks and wash satins in white or in flesh color and they have never a flower nor a furbelove to bedeck them. Then there are bloomers, which have proved beyond doubt the strength of their hold upon the feminine masses. They are useful for wear with tight skirts, which, to look their best, demand that petticoats be thrown into the discard. The bloomer has come to stay and, in silk, it is an indispensable part of the wardrobe of the modern woman.

The colors of the new underthings become more and more varied. The tradition of white for purposes of this sort has almost vanished. Now, any pastel shade is used and the more unusual it is the better. We have seen the outer effects of black and red and orange underclothes and marvelled at them, but, nevertheless, we have settled back into a casual acceptance of colored underwear as an everyday possibility. In chiffon and in crepe de chine and satin the colors vary through all tones and shades, and even in the cotton materials there is seen every variety of tone.

On the tinted underclothes there is much use of embroidery in silk threads, in woolen threads, in mercerized stitches and even in colored cotton embroidery stitchings. It is considered much better to form an edge by a buttonholing of some contrasting shade than to resort to the old method of just making a hem. Then there are the long woolen stitches, which show to their best advantage on the thin chiffon things.

From underwear to negligee is but a slip, and it does seem as though we are paying more attention to the graceful and becoming robes d'interieur which so long have been a necessary part of the wardrobe of a French woman. Never before have we shown such a concentrated interest in the gowns which are for private appearance only.

The lines of the new negligees are simple enough, but the trimmings grow more gorgeous as one season melts into another. On the newest ones there are layers of chiffon so constructed that the things look only like floating clouds. Every trick and scheme is resorted to that the garment may be lightness itself. Lace is used lavishly. Sometimes it constitutes the overdress and then again it is used for the foundation slip so that only a suggestion of its loretteness shines through the overlying chiffon. Silk lace trims the edges of other chiffon negligees, being carried around the long lines of the outer edges and giving the effect of something not quite tangible in its elusiveness.