

The MYSTERY of HARTLEY HOUSE

by Clifford S. Raymond
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THAT'S DOBSON.

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. 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 make-believe engagement. Later they find it is to be 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.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

Our charming old gentleman could not go through the entire institution, and the warden led him to the most accessible parts of the interesting place. We saw the rattle-chair works and the honor men in the gardens. We also took one glance at a tier of cell-houses and peeped into the dining-hall and into the chapel.

The warden would have had us stay to dinner.

I had to forbid this. It would have been too much of a physical strain upon Mr. Sidney. I knew that the little diversion was interesting him, and I was glad to have him interested, but I did not want to tax his strength.

"I'm the doctor's servant," he said, "I'll look into the library if you don't mind, warden, and then we'll obey the physician."

Warden Williams led us to the library, which contained a large collection of books. An elderly convict was engaged in cataloguing some new volumes which had just been taken out of boxes. He was interested and paid no attention to us.

Mr. Sidney looked at him for a few minutes.

"What did you say was his crime?" he asked of the warden.

"That's Dobson," said Mr. Williams. "You must know his story. He is the man who killed his brother. You are living in the Dobson house."

I looked at the frail, white-haired man with a sudden shock of interest. This was the man who had created the ghost story at Hartley house. He was fumbling registry cards and writing on them. He was frail and insignificant. He had been once, by legend, a sturdy, muscular, cruel brute. He was now feeble and interested in cataloguing.

Mr. Sidney looked about the room.

"This does not seem to be so well protected as the other parts of the prison," he said.

"It is not thought necessary," said the warden. "Escape from here might not be impossible for an agile man. It



"He is the Man Who Killed His Brother."

is not impossible from any part of the prison. It can only be made improbable. It would be easier from here, but still difficult. But this old man would be in a harder prison of deprivation and friendlessness outside than he is inside."

"Do you mean that he is the man who made the ghost story I bought with my house?" Mr. Sidney asked.

"That's all there is human of your ghost story," said the warden. "It is more than most ghost stories have," said Mr. Sidney.

CHAPTER V.

I could not believe the slightest particle in the ghost story. I am rationalistic. But as the legend of the pond took shape, my imagination began to give substance to its shadows.

Yet the place was genial and cordial. Mr. Sidney's joviality was the dominant note in the house. An aging sick man might naturally have been testy. He might have been impatient, have had whims and crochets. He might have been irascible in his demands upon and acceptance of service. But Mr. Sidney was always cordial and considerate. A great deal of the time he spent in bed. When he was not in bed, he sat in a great chair, and very often a yellow Persian cat rested on his knees. It was a difficult if not dangerous matter for any one else than Mr. Sidney to touch the cat, named Algol.

"The Winking Demon," said Mr. Sidney, fingering the cat's ruff as it lay on his lap, and purred. I knew just enough of the star Algol and its variability to understand the whimsicality of an old man's naming a cat for the winking sun. Algol in Mr. Sidney's lap blinked at me, and the old man's genius for understanding and classification seemed uncanny.

Mr. Sidney's room was of great size. It had two fireplaces and a large cove of windows bulging toward the west. At the smaller of the two fireplaces he had his breakfast. Either at the large fireplace or in the outward bulge of windows, he had his dinner.

In spite of the Persian cat, Mr. Sidney had three canaries in the room. Algol respected them after a fashion that I thought uncertain. I have seen a canary sitting on the cat's head, but I thought it was a decided case of misplaced confidence. Algol wanted that canary and would continue to want it. He was deterred from natural action in the matter by his affection for the strange but kindly master who wanted cats and canaries to live together in amity.

I know I never fully grasped Mr. Sidney's scheme of life, but I thought that he found existence ironic. His graciousness and his cheerfulness, I thought, represented the garlands of his conquest of morbidity. His personal charm was extraordinary. Every one in the house felt it. But an astonishing thing about Mr. Sidney was an occasional emotion which, as it manifested itself in his expressions—and that was the only fashion I saw it for a long time—was one of savage hate.

It was only by coming on him when he was not expecting me that I saw this. I remember that the first time I saw the expression on his face I was dumfounded. That I was not expected in his room was entirely without intention on my part. People who were accustomed to being with him walked into the room without ceremony. His bedroom and bath were to one side. His living-room he insisted should be open without formality.

On the occasion I speak of I had come in quietly, but it was without intention to surprise my patient. He was sitting in his large chair with Algol on his knees. His eyes were closed, and on his face was an expression of malevolence that was almost demonic. It was so startling that the sight of it stopped me in my step and made me feel more than uneasy, almost afraid. Mr. Sidney was quiet, except that with one hand he stroked Algol about the head and ears. The caress was almost imperceptible in motion, but Algol was purring so loudly that the sound filled the otherwise quiet room.

The malevolence—the malignancy, hatred, concentrated essence of ferocity—in Mr. Sidney's face would have stopped anyone. To one who had affection for him as I had, it was abhorrent to see him so. It was a confession of something I did not want to know.

I was in fear that he might hear me and, opening his eyes, find that I had discovered him. I was embarrassed and uncertain what to do. It was a silly predicament, as I saw afterward. My part was quite simple. I should have paid no attention to any such phenomenon as the expression on a man's face and have acted perfectly naturally.

The common-sense thing—and I consider myself fairly sensible—was apparent afterward. It indicates the astonishing shock of the thing that I was unable to act sensibly. What was the expression in an amiable, charming man's face, to knock a sensible person out of all his senses? Here was a dozing man merely toying with a cat's ears, and the very sight of what was expressed in his face, made me numb.

I cannot understand it now, the terrifying sensation being one which disappeared as the recollection of the emotions faded. What I did was to back toward the door, open it as quietly as I could, back out, and then re-enter the room noiselessly.

Mr. Sidney was looking at me smil-

ingly. His charm of manner never seemed more positive and active.

"Hello, doctor!" he said. "I needed company and just your company. If you would only drink wine!"

A broken pipe in the laundry made it necessary to call a plumber from Hartley, and to get quick service, it was agreed that we should send a car for the man and his helper.

The day was pleasant, and for the sake of the drive I went with the driver. The plumber was a fat man of the comic type. I thought he must be the embodiment of all the plumbers' jokes. They seemed to have created him; he was the product of the comics.

I even asked him if he were sure he had all his tools. I thought he would be sure to send us back for a wrench. He was amiable, laughed at anything or nothing and was saved from being a nuisance only by an abounding animal optimism which was infectious.

Driving through the Hartley house grounds, we came to the pool, and the plumber—named Harkins—chuckled. Thus far, whenever he or something else amused him, he had laughed. Now he chuckled as if in recollection of an experience richer or deeper than any he had been talking of.

"That place is going to be remembered by me," he said. "I have been out here only once since the night I made a bet I was not afraid to sit on the bank here for an hour. They've got a good many stories of this place in town. I had been drinking a little. I don't do it steady, but once in a while I get out. You've got to do it to keep the house going happy. Give the wife something to talk about. My wife would rather scold me than eat, and she loves her food."

"We were at the White Pigeon, having a good time but thinking of going home, when some one started on this Hartley house story. Everybody had something to say, and I said that there was no ghost that could scare me, at least no ghost that ever was within a hundred miles of Hartley. That's where I made a fool of myself. I've got to admit that's where I made a fool of myself."

"I bet five dollars I would sit an hour on the bank at this place. I forgot all about the dogs, or I'd not have made the bet. Anyway, they didn't bother me. We got an automobile and drove out here. The fellows left me at the pool and went a mile back. They were going to take my word for it. I was to stay an hour and then start walking back. At the end of an hour they would start toward me and pick me up. They had beer and sandwiches. I had a couple of bottles and some cheese and crackers."

"I wasn't afraid of that place. I'm not afraid of any place unless I get to thinking about this one. It was along in October. A hook-owl was somewhere back of me, and there was a whippoorwill up toward the house."

"I'm used to hoot-owls and whippoorwills, but I hadn't drunk more than half a bottle of beer before even these things began to sound different."

"The current of the river kept knocking at the big rock at the up end of the pool, and you began to think that things were reaching for you out of the dark. I'd have given ten dollars to quit, but I got so that I didn't want to move. I felt safer sitting still."

"Then I began to hear things that I don't suppose were making a noise at all. It may be it was rabbits in the bush. I nearly died when I heard a cry about fifty feet back of me. I did hear that. I guess a ferret had got a rabbit. You know how a rabbit cries—like a baby."

"I was sitting in the open, and I thought I'd feel better if I got my back up against something. So I crawled over to some bushes and sat down behind them."

"Maybe I had been there a half an hour, feeling scary and uncomfortable, when I heard a regular yell. There wasn't any fooling about that. It sounded like some one being hurt but yelled no so much because of the hurt as because he was mad."

"You've heard fellows talking about their hair standing on end. I never knew what it really meant before, but my hair just stood right up. I felt like some one was trying to scalp me, and I was gooseflesh all over."

"It had been dark on account of clouds, but just then the moon came out and lighted up the place. There was a man standing on the edge of the pool, just about where I had been sitting. He was leaning with both hands on a cane and standing perfectly still. He didn't seem like a man. He looked like one, but you had a feeling that he wasn't one."

"I don't want ever to be so scared again. I didn't know who had yelled, but I thought this man had, and I didn't think he was a man. I thought he was a ghost. I'm not saying what I think now, but if I had to, I'd say that I saw the ghost of this place—and anybody that wants to laugh can laugh. He came down here at night and got cured of laughing. The man stood still, leaning on his cane. I watched him until I began to feel that I could use my legs again. I don't know why I was so scared, but I was. I crawled away through the brush for a hundred feet or so. Then I got up and ran."

"I heard that yell behind me again. I'll bet nobody around here ever ran a mile as fast as I did. I scared the fellows who were waiting for me. They didn't poke any fun at me. They looked at me and got that automobile started. I paid the bet, but they didn't have any laugh on me. There isn't one of them would come down here at night now."

"When was this?" I asked.

"Four or five years ago," said the plumber. "Some time in October."

We came to the house, and he went into the laundry to fix the pipes.

"It doesn't look haunted around here," he said as he perceived the tangible joviality of the place, "but you've got to get me out before dark."

That was virtually the complete substance of the Hartley house ghost—the picture of a man leaning on a cane by the edge of the river. Romance had to be content with it.

One evening in late October, which had turned chill and brought up a high wind, Mr. Sidney produced a new phenomenon. He had a strange flash of strength. When I went to his room after dinner I found him walking about without help. Ordinarily, if he walked at all, Jed was his strength.

"Occasionally I can do it, doctor," he said. "The strength comes. I usually pay for it next day, however."

"I'd be very careful, then," I suggested.

"Yes, but you do not know how grateful it is to feel vigor once in a while," he said, continuing to walk forth and back in the room.

I sat down and watched him without remonstrating. It was astonishing to see him so agile and strong but I had learned that timid prudence was very ineffective. I had confessed my inability to understand him.

He did not seem to want to continue life for the purpose of preserving its sensations but for the purpose of some accomplishment. His conditions were so pleasant that it might be reasonable to desire a prolonging of them. Evidently he was not set upon that. He was not trying to accomplish anything. He did nothing. He had no unfinished work. And yet his will to live, I knew, was a will to see the fruit of something. He seemed to have a spiritual incentive; something that had other than a physical impulse controlled him and gave him resolution.

I was marveling at his strange activity when Isobel and Mrs. Sidney came in. Mr. Sidney proposed whist, and we began a game. The wind increased in violence, and the log fire grew in comfort. We had a pleasant game, disturbed for me only by speculations as to the cause of Mr. Sidney's strange animation and strength.

Shortly after ten o'clock the ladies said good night, and Jed came in with a fresh log for the fire. The wind had been increasing in volume, sound and power. I was thinking of bed.

"Sit a while longer, doctor," Mr. Sidney urged. "Jed and I shall be better for some other company. This is the sort of night we like to sit up to enjoy. Esthetically one ought to make the most of such a night."

Jed went out and presently came in again with two bottles of wine.

"What are we drinking tonight, Jed?" Mr. Sidney asked.

"I thought the evening suggested a warm sherry," said Jed.

"I think it does," said Mr. Sidney. "There is body and a live soul in sherry."

"But certainly," I suggested in alarm, "you will not drink sherry."

"Indeed not," said Mr. Sidney. "Jed drinks it for me, and I watch him. You must have a glass with him—just one. He'll have a dozen—I don't ask you to follow him—but just one."

Jed opened a bottle, and when he offered me a glass I yielded. I wanted to increase the sense of protective comforts against that shrill wind outside.

Jed drew a comfortable chair close to the fire and took his wine in large but appreciative gulps. I took mine in small but appreciative sips. The fire roared, and the wind howled.

Jed, drinking by gulps, soon was exhilarated. Mr. Sidney and I had been rational. We had been talking. I recall, of the substitution of a Syrian idea of immortality, concerned chiefly with the north European idea of Valhalla, when Jed began to sing and with gusto and affection opened another bottle of wine. The wind grew in violence.

"It is a night for any of the living dead about a place," I said.

"I like a wind that has many voices," said Mr. Sidney. "It produces certain sensations or emotions that are primitive. It suggests a threat and increases the sense of shelter and comfort. We sit like peasants about the fireplace and are inclined to legends."

Story of the Dobson Murder.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Sometimes we may have an ideal legislature—one that will repeal more laws than it passes.

BLOOM LIKE ROSES

Cotton Frocks in Bright Colors for Midsummer.

Brilliant Crimson Volles and Flame-Hued Swisses With White Dots to the Fore.

The simile which likens the cotton frock to a flower is not by any means far-fetched, observes a fashion writer, particularly when one compares the earlier frocks which the first spring showings brought forth, and the midsummer models being displayed for immediate wearing. Like spring blossoms the earlier cotton frocks were shy and dainty things, pastel in shades, modest in trimming and as fresh as the first daffodils and violets. Now cotton frocks are blooming like the rose in the song, "In crimson splendor." No red is too bright for the midsummer dress-up gown. Brilliant crimson volles are to the fore, and flame-colored swisses with white dots. Only a black or a white hat could be worn with these gay things, which somehow or other, due to some secret code of the modiste, do not look hot as one might imagine they would. But black hats and white hats are excellent choice for setting off the beauty of the frilly frock, particularly the transparent hat, flower trimmed with field blossoms and showing the full details of the coiffure it covers.

That frocks can be frilly and frolicsome and still be practically tinted is another feature of the midsummer season. One sees just plenty of lovely warm bronze organdies, and also many navy and black. Dotted swisses in black with white dots are the smartest things in street wear. Then there are the lovely Alice blue volles, inconspicuous because so simply made and trimmed with self-color novelty ribbon at the waist.

Volle, by the way, is pushing the organdies just a bit to the background for midsummer wear. Probably this is because the day of the crinoline silhouette is about over, or at least will be by fall, and volle is soft enough to shape itself to the straighter lines demanded by the mode. The very fine French volle, sheer enough to be confused with organdie is mounted over satin slips, often beaded, and cut in panel effects to show the silk underdress. Another popular way of treating the volle frock is to trim it with drawnwork, and lace through the drawn threads silk tapes or velvet ribbons. Such a frock in lilac volle had self-color velvet ribbon laced through the drawnwork in symmetrical design, the ends caught down with yellow buttons, and yellow, lilac and

CREPE WAIST FOR FALL WEAR



This is an attractive brown waist of crepe, featuring Democracy grain ribbon in two shades of brown.

SIMPLE FROCKS ARE COSTLY

Dainty Frocks of Yesteryear Under Present Conditions Are Real Luxuries.

It is a long time since the couturiers of Paris paid so much attention to real summer frocks as they have during the present season, according to a Paris letter in *Age*. Women who know that they look well in these sheer affairs pray for a chance to appear in this most captivating of all feminine apparel. It is a type of gown which the sultry summers of a great part of America have made extremely well liked by American women, a type which suits them, and which they understand how to wear to the very best advantage. But that it is extremely becoming to French women, as well, is demonstrated at every gathering this season, when the weather is warm enough to warrant the wearing of such frail, ethereal attire.

Frocks of this type used to offer an agreeable opportunity for economy, for in the old days the price of cotton fabrics was low and strangely out of all proportion to their charm. In these times, when the cost of living in Paris has increased over 320 per cent and everything but ordinary income has gone up in proportion, cotton fabrics have become more expensive than silken ones used to be.

Now the difference in a model made of organdie instead of taffeta is too inconsiderable to be worth noticing. Long past are those happy times when a clever lady's maid could run up a little lingerie frock which, with the addition of the proper accessories, would give her mistress a delightful

BUTTERFLY DRESS FOR CHILD



Attractive garment for little miss displayed at the co-operative fashion exhibition in New York City.

black velvet ribbons forming the gir-die. This same threading of velvet ribbon is met on some of the lingerie hats made of silk and cotton fabrics.

Novelty fabrics appear enough in the midsummer showings to live things. Thus one finds white French volle banded horizontally with yellow cotton plush. This white and yellow is a popular color combination, as is also citron and Alice blue, yellow and gray, and several shades of the same color, such as three shades of orchid for the same organdie frock.

BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLOTHING

Garments for Youngsters May Be Made at Home From More Plentiful Remnants.

There is no reason whatever why the small boy's clothes should not be made at home and economy served as in the case of the girl child's outfitting. It is just as easy to find attractive remnants and short ends of material suitable for clothes for the boy as it is for the girl.

For the very small boy nothing is smarter than the little house artist's smock of heavy linen or cotton, worn over bloomers of matching or contrasting material. Sailor and middy suits are good looking and serviceable also, and this year there are over-all styles galore for the very young man of the family. One novelty recently brought out in a miniature replica of a man's overall suit, made of very dark blue denim and trimmed down each leg with a band of vivid red.

Wool jersey cloth, the heavy weave used for women's sport suits and coats, is a material very much in favor for suits for the small boy for the coming fall and for present cool day wear.

change of costume at only a nominal cost. Modern "little frocks," for all their apparent simplicity, are not "run up" as easily as all that, while the infinite accessories of footwear, hat, gloves and parasol, which turn them from a covering into a costume, are such a serious item in the budget that one really thinks twice before attempting a type of costume that requires special accompaniments of that sort.

Dress Button in Back.

An interesting point in connection with the advance styles in autumn frocks is the tendency to button many of them in the back, the buttons showing and giving a real trimming touch. The attempt to fasten a frock invisibly in the back is always rather unsuccessful, because rarely is the fastening actually concealed, and, unless a woman has someone upon whom she can depend to help her get into her clothes, the back fastening that is "invisible" is terribly trying to the nerves. When buttons are used in the conventional way a dress can be fastened in the back without much trouble.

Pongee Curtains Good.

Some decorators will not recommend pongee for windows exposed to an unusual amount of sun, contending that the heat of the sun through glass rots the fabric. However, a judicious manipulation of shades and blinds makes this fault negligible. For laundering purposes there is no fabric that stands up as does pongee.

Among Favorite Models.

Dark-colored organdies, including tulle with terra cotta and cherry red trimming are among favorite models.