

The Mystery of Hartley House

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By
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ALCOTT'S STORY.

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 Isabel, 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 Isabel. The young people consent to the make-believe engagement. Later they find it is to head off Jed, who would marry Isabel. Jed tries to kill John, but the matter is smoothed over. John, though "engaged" to Isabel, 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 south for the winter and John is lonesome.

CHAPTER VI—Continued.

Dr. Brownell suggested the winter trip to the South. Mr. Sidney's vitality needed careful nursing. It was important to protect him from winter rigors, even as they could be modified in a sickroom. The doctor said he himself felt the need of a change. He prescribed one for both his patient and himself. He and Mr. Sidney made the arrangements. Mrs. Sidney and Isabel were to go.

Arrangements went ahead rapidly, and a sense of desolation increased within me. Romantic folly came to its accounting. The fairy story was to be ended without youth's necessary "They lived happily ever after."

The yacht came up to its mooring and lay by the landing for a week while the provisioning was being cared for. Hundreds of bottles of Mr. Sidney's fine wines were put on board for the unspeskable Jed.

Isabel was eagerly anticipatory. Mrs. Sidney, I thought, seemed merely to be resigned, with trepidation.

Doctor Brownell said he was depriving me of an interesting voyage. If he did not go, I should have been needed, but he thought it important for his efficiency that he conserve his strength over the winter, and be asked me to act as one of his assistants.

That was flattery. It was intended to be so.

Mrs. Sidney was the one who offered me the real balm.

"John," she said, "we shall want you with us. We shall miss you."

"Don't you think, Mrs. Sidney," I suggested, "that now we can consider this fiction terminated?"

"You mean your engagement to Isabel?"

"Surely."

"No, please," she said. "On the boat there will be no problems. The community is too compact and must be considerate. But when we come back, I'll need you just as before."

Isabel said:

"Good-by, John. Be at the landing when we return. You'll be the first person I want to see."

I ought not to have been so disconsolate. These were fair portents, but a portent does little to console a loss. I stood on the little dock and watched the yacht go down the river. And when it had disappeared below the point of land south of the pool, all the world was sad and life had no prospects to give it value.

Charles drove me to the city. I was a bit of human driftwood for a week. It did not matter that they were coming back. They were gone; that was the disaster. It was in the present; the future is too ambiguous for consolation or comfort.

I went through a winter of ecstatic distress, trying to be efficient in my discharge of professional duties for Doctor Brownell and to be professionally composed in aspect and mind. I had an anguished delight in my experiences. My loneliness was my most acute pain and my most cherished comfort. I did not want to profane the emotional solemnity of so much unhappiness by subjecting it frequently to the banal touch of sociable life in the ordinary. It was a joy to be profoundly unhappy.

I had letters from the enchanted party in the South. Mrs. Sidney wrote twice a week with great affection. Mr. Sidney once a week dictated to Jed a letter, cordial and jocular, for me. Occasionally Jed added a sheet for himself, kindly or rasping as the mood had him at the time.

Isabel also wrote, but with the greatest eccentricity. While they were at Palm Beach I had a letter a day from

her for four days. Then I had none for two weeks, although they remained at Palm Beach. She made the postman a tragedian for me.

In one letter this virginal imp wrote as if I were her lover, and that letter was as the song of the meadow lark from a snow-covered field in March, as the odor of lilacs on a warm night in May.

The Sidneys went to the Bahamas, but did not remain there. They wrote me that Mr. Sidney was well. Doctor Brownell was convinced that all were the better, himself included, for their experiment and that Mr. Sidney's condition would permit a longer voyage in his pleasant circumstances. Consequently they were going on to South America. Mr. Sidney wanted to revisit Montevideo.

From Montevideo I had a letter from Jed in a different tone from his sarcastic banter and taunting. I thought it was the letter of a man who had suffered a shock. I could not say why I thought so, but I thought something had disturbed him. I gathered the idea that something had changed Jed's view of life.

Early in March came letters saying that my folks shortly would be on their way home, to arrive after our uncertain spring had resolved itself securely into weather safe for a feeble man who had accustomed himself to luxurious temperatures. I then felt invigorated, as by a promise in March of hepatica. My winter was breaking up.

I met an old-time acquaintance, a dentist who had been several years in South America. His name was Alcott, Henry Alcott.

Alcott and I never had been intimate or affectionate, but we greeted each other with ardor. I was lonesome. Alcott may have been. There is a loneliness associated with a return to a place which has forgotten you and receives you as an alien.

We had dinner together and enjoyed our meeting. There was, furtively, at dinner, a reminiscent attentiveness in his conversation. It suggested that he was smirking over exploits which he might relate if his restraints were broken down.

He had a talent for merely carnal stories. They gained additional carnality in his telling of them. I must have been given the record of half the amatory experiences of South America for two years. Alcott told them with gusto. The one that fascinated me he did not emphasize more than the others. As he told these stories he was trying to convey the charm of sex-adventure in Latin America. I think he wanted, by other instances, to suggest his own adventures.

A man named Sinclair—that was as Alcott remembered the name, but it might, he said, have been St. John or Southgrove or Sergeant or anything else beginning with S; it was long before Alcott's time in South America, and he merely told the story because it was a standardized episode—this man Sinclair, an Englishman or a man from the States, a fairly young man, anyway, and attractive, had fallen in love with a most charming young woman of excellent family.

Alcott could not remember whether this little episode had been staged in Rio or Valparaiso or Buenos Aires or where.

"It might have been in Montevideo," he said. He did not emphasize the remark, but the remark subsequently emphasized the story for me.

Sinclair—Alcott thought we might as well agree upon Sinclair as a name—had come out of somewhere or nowhere and had made a great deal of money. When he fell in love, he was an advantageous match. The parents accepted him gladly.

Sinclair and the young lady were married, but he did not have the Latin genius for isolating and guarding a woman. Neither did he have the genius for completely interesting and absorbing a woman. He was in the shipping business. He was a very practical and business-minded man, but Alcott had heard, a genial and jovial man nevertheless.

Lovers came, as lovers will. The lady was too charming and had too much freedom. She was innocent and guileless, but her husband was not the barrier needed. Alcott said he thought she was of noble sort and was betrayed by her idea that human beings had character.

He was not precise as to the dilemma she had entered, how or why she entered it. A man of reputation for discreet gallantry, a handsome man of attractive culture, was encouraged by her frank and unchilled attitude toward him to try a desperate measure.

There was a designing servant in the house. The lover corrupted the servant and was introduced into the house. The husband was supposed to be away on a business trip. He came back ahead of time, as husbands sometimes do, and stopped at his club before he went home.

A friend of the lover saw him and, knowing what was being essayed at the man's home, was aghast. He induced other friends of the lover to try to detain the husband on one jovial pretext or another while he communicated with the house. He was unsuccessful in his attempt to use the tele-

phone. The other men were unsuccessful in their attempt to detain the husband. The friend began a race with the husband to reach the house. Unluckily for him, the cab he took not only was pulled by the faster horse, but he being conscious that it was a race and the husband being unconscious of it, his driver had reasons given him for speed.

It was unfortunate for the friend, because there was a tragedy later, and he was its victim. He arrived in time to warn the lover. The lady, appalled by the appearance of the lover, aghast to consider that she had been thought so unworthy as to attract these attentions, and suffering from a confusion which blunted her judgment, had not called her servants, but had endeavored with a dignity consciously self-compromised to assert her self-respect and recall her lover's reason.

In a turmoil of abasing emotions she was engaged in this effort of self-control and assertion of dignity when the friend destroyed all composure by his announcement. The lover went instantly out of a window. The friend, having his own dignity of innocence, would not compromise his self-respect in this fashion. The husband arrived upon a scene which could not be explained. His wife, in spite of her efforts at control, was in hysteria. The friend's presence was inexplicable. Arrangements were made to satisfy honor. The friend was killed in a fashion satisfactory to the police and wholly satisfactory to the outraged husband.

There was the situation: an innocent man dead, a wronged husband satisfied, the wife absolved by the romantic, lying statement of the man who sacrificed himself, that in the transaction he



As He Drank More He Made Them Personal.

had been presumptuous and the wife entirely guiltless—and the guilty lover gone scot-free. But the servant knew. Tremendous possibilities in this, Alcott thought.

Then Alcott went to other stories. As he drank more, he made them personal. I felt sick. It was outrageous for my recollection to emphasize his merely incidental remark:

"It might have been Montevideo."

CHAPTER VII.

It may seem unreasonable that a story by a man incidentally met, an indifferent acquaintance, had started a solvent at work on my mysteries. I am discussing, now, matters I had tried to keep out of my consciousness. Things at Hartley had insisted upon an explanation which I did not want to find or give.

I could not kill a curiosity, although I was ashamed by it. I felt indecent in my almost involuntary conjectures regarding Mrs. Sidney. Circumstances did demand an explanation. No one could perceive the strange facts of the house and not speculate as to their cause. It might be unpleasant to do so, but it was impossible not to do so. The predominant fact, however, was that my folks were coming home, and that my affection for Mrs. Sidney had become a sacrament and my affection for Isabel a tragedy.

The yacht brought these dear people to the landing in the river at Hartley house. I, in the city, was called on the telephone by Isabel. There was a dynamic value in the inspiration of her voice. She was, in her greeting, cheery and wholesome. It was a glad, clean "Hullo!"—crisp and jovial.

My people came home in May, and the day after their arrival I went to Hartley house with my belongings, rejoicing, in an ecstasy, to take the well-known ride into the wonderful world of fancy and endeared companionship, by the haunted pool and into the jovial household.

Jed, I knew as soon as I saw him, was changed—not violently but in some fashion and perceptibly. Mr. Sidney was not. His geniality could not change. He made me feel that he had missed me and was rejoiced to see me again. Mrs. Sidney seemed, spiritually,

to continue to lean on me for support, a thing that I perceived in abasement and with a sense of unworthiness and unreliability. Isabel was as wholesome as the air. In the most pleasant circumstances life was resumed at Hartley house.

Jed had not wholly lost his truculence and his occasional flashes of malevolence, but he was subdued. I thought he seemed furtive.

I asked Mrs. Sidney if she had observed a change. She said it had not occurred to her to think of it as a change, but there had been a difference for which she was grateful. She remembered that when they were making their visit to Montevideo Jed had gone down to the docks and had come back obviously disturbed. She had observed the fact without giving much thought to it. She was not sure but that there had been an amelioration of Jed since then. She had regarded the event as insignificant. It might have had a meaning, but if so, it was obscured.

Our days were of pleasant routine, but nevertheless, for reasons which I have tried to make perceptible if not explicit, the expectation was touched by dread. We had, for several months, no outstanding incident or disturbing happening. Mr. Sidney's health remained exceptionally good. He created a new interest in his life: he had not forgotten his visit to the penitentiary, and he was eager to do what he could for the convicts.

Evidently he thought of his restricted life as something not wholly alien, except for its comforts, to theirs. The most that he could do was to send books and occasionally to prepare a Sunday afternoon program of music to be given by a small orchestra which he had brought out from the city. He never went back to the penitentiary, but once a week Jed or I drove over, and he was interested in our accounts.

Jed was beginning to wear off the fine aspects of his good behavior. Some restless ambition tortured this man, and some power he had not completely used invited him to make full use of it.

I had implored Mrs. Sidney to inform me instantly if he became obnoxious again. I understood how important it was to protect Mr. Sidney's peace of mind, but I thought I had the upper hand of Jed—although not understanding his case at all—and could manage him.

Isabel, knowing that she was pursued by the ridiculous ambitions of the man, found amusement in it. I found only moral nausea. I could see Jed's arrogance arising again, and twice a week I was awakened by his slinging in the hallway as he came from drinking in Mr. Sidney's room. I was expecting something to happen; and something did, but it was certainly not what I expected. It opened up a new phase of the mystery.

One morning I was waiting for Jed to bring my coffee to the pleasant room which he early in our acquaintance had recommended. Not the least curious thing about Jed was the fact that he seldom in his sober moments was anything but a perfect servant when service was demanded. It did not matter how serious and deadly the issue might be between Jed and me as men; when the matter lay between Jed and me as servant and served, Jed was the servant. Therefore, no matter how things might stand with us when, in the morning at an early hour, I went to the room Jed originally suggested, I expected him to come with my coffee, and he always did.

It was my habit to arise at seven o'clock and be dressed and in this room by half-past seven. I usually read a book until Jed brought the coffee and the morning paper. It was a luxurious and restful experience to have this hour each day.

This morning in question I was reading placidly when looking out the window, I was startled to see a strange figure of a man on the lawn. He was close to the house, almost under my window, and I even could see that he wore earrings. He had a handkerchief around his neck. He was swarthy and black-haired. I thought he was Spanish, and I thought he was a sailor. These were only impressions, but they identified him for me later. He was passive and was looking up at the house in an interested but puzzled fashion, harmlessly, one would have said, if the wholly unexpected nature of his presence had not been in itself significant.

Men wearing earrings were not so common of sight as to allow one wearing them to be unnoticed. Strangers of any kind seldom came our way. Strangers of his kind were extraordinary. He was looking up at the windows as if he sought the answer to something that had interested if not mystified him. I knew, in every instinct, that he had not come in by chance but by design.

I was looking, leaning forward, at this strange phenomenon on the lawn when a crash of metal and breaking china gave me a shock. Jed—whom I had not heard entering—had seen over my shoulder the stranger on the lawn and had dropped the coffee tray.

"You knew that man and you wanted to kill him."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Don't Read When Drowsy.

To read or study when tired or drowsy is to strain the eyes to a dangerous degree, writes W. M. Carhart, Public Health. Avoid evening study whenever possible. If you are using your eyes by artificial light, be sure the light does not shine directly into the eyes, and try to have it come from behind and to the left side so as to avoid the harmful glare.

LIKE COOL FROCKS

Pastel Shades for Warm Weather—Pale Green Coolest.

Colors Play Most Important Part in Milady's Comfort on Hot Mid-summer Days.

Though it is rather maddening to be told how cool we look on a hot summer day, when we are feeling quite the opposite, after the first indignation has worn off the remark is apt to have a psychological effect that actually makes us feel cooler, points out a fashion correspondent.

And, after all, it is a very big compliment to be told that we look cool when the weather makes such an appearance almost impossible, for what is less attractive than any one who is obviously hot?

Cool colors and cool fabrics go a long way toward making a cool summer. This is evidenced by the usual custom of dressing our rooms in their summer clothes if we are to inhabit them during the warm weather. Heavy velvet and brocade hangings give way to cretonnes or silks in cool shades and elaborate formal curtains are replaced by simple sheer affairs. Thick rugs are taken up, too, and all this is done because it makes the rooms look cooler.

This principle holds good in dressing ourselves, too, and pastel shades in delicate fabrics rule our lives in summer if we are fortunate enough to be out of town where such things are appropriate. But even among pastel shades there are some that are cooler than others, and we are not apt to take this into consideration in choosing our Swiss and organdie frocks. Pale green, the shade that has appro-



An outdoor frock with a skirt of kumai-kumai and overblouse of printed dew-kiet. With it is worn a wide-brimmed sailor, crown encircled with double ruching of satin de luxe.

privately been called "seafoam," has perhaps the most cooling effect upon the eye. White, of course, is notably chilly, and pale blue has the same tendencies. Shades of rose and yellow have warmth and light, and though they are favorite summer colors on a really sizzling day their wearers will not look as comfortable as they might.

COLORS IN HOME ROOMS

Many Tints to Pick From, but Harmony Should Be the Watchword for Cheerfulness.

"This is the blue room," so many people who are showing you their homes will say to you, "or this is the pink room," and the only thing you can think of is how could they think it necessary to tell you, you couldn't possibly make a mistake, it certainly was blue—or pink, as the case may be. The trouble is that they do not realize that every room needs splashes of different colors to give it character. For example, one young woman wanted a rose bedroom. She bought white furniture and had the walls done in pale pink and white striped paper. There was a rose rug on the floor with a darker rose border, roses ran riot over the white curtains, the chairs were upholstered in the same rose cretonne, there was a rose lining under the lace bed cover, and a rose chiffon shade on the reading lamp at the head of the bed. Everything was lovely, and yet she didn't like it, but she didn't know why. Her first guest was an interior decorator and she was able to put her finger on the difficulty from the very start. She made her put the rosy cretonne curtains in another room, and get a black and white striped material for the windows, hang a stunning black lacquered mirror over the low boy, change the lamp shade for a French blue one with rose-colored trimmings and put a few dashes of the French blue about in little accessories, a quill pen on the

CHIC COAT FOR TRAVEL WEAR



Here is shown a Parisian traveling coat of soft undyed cloth with white and blue stripes running diagonally across the waist.

ATTIRE FOR GIRL WHO HIKES

Knickers, With Long Coat, Low-Heeled Shoes, Tam, Long Cane, Among Requisites.

Bathing is far from being the only or even the most popular summer sport. Walking—especially for the devotee of the mountains—has a great many passionate followers. There are girls who are really not the least little bit afraid of a ten-mile stroll in the forenoon.

Of course, to thoroughly enjoy walking one must be dressed accordingly. No long or tight skirt, no high heels, these would spoil this healthy pleasure. Nowadays knickers are being worn quite frequently for mountain climbing. They are prettier than ever and the girl with the athletic figure—and most walkers possess it—looks charming in this boyish outfit.

A lovely costume of this sort consists of dark brown leed shorts quite heelless, heavy woolen sport stockings and light tan and dark brown checked knickers. With this is worn a dark brown coat which reaches almost to the bottom of the knickers. A pongee blouse in the natural shade tied with a Windsor bow of checked taffeta adds a note of brightness to the otherwise rather sober outfit. A tam o' shanter of bright tan suede cloth, a long cane, a heavy pair of gauntlet gloves—and there you are.

Worn Over Underslips.

Frocks of white organdie daintily embroidered with white are worn over underslips of vivid taffeta—the organdie, which is a new and exceedingly transparent sort, looking like a mere white mist over the bright colored underdress.

Bloused Back Effect.

Predictions for fall coats point to the bloused back effect. Metallic stitching and fulness which does not distend the sides are other characteristics.

Short Sleeves for Fall.

Short sleeves are shown on many silk frocks for fall.

Black Lace Over White Satin.

Some of the black laces are made up over white satin. Constance Talmadge uses a metal cloth for foundation in her pretty black lace worn in a popular picture. Metal cloths are lovely under either white or black laces, and the moving picture actresses are very much addicted to them for the reason their photograph so handsomely. There is only one other material which is as much favored by screen artists. This is velvet.

But metal cloths are so very dressy and so much associated with winter costumes for evening that many like the satin and taffeta foundations best because they make a cooler looking costume for summer wear.

Gray Trimmed With White.

Dotted Swiss frocks of gray are piped with white organdie or Swiss. The dotted surface and the touch of white are enough trimming for charming frocks.