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What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

by Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains, Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, calls at his office and warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"Julius Caesar was a small man," he said suddenly, much to his host's amazement. "So was Napoleon. So is Lloyd George." He bent over the table, as if imparting a profound secret. "So was the master of them all—my idol, Lenin." Mr. Smucker touched his receding forehead with a dramatic gesture. "Don't think, because you are twice as big, that you can outmatch me here!"

Again he smote his brow. "That's all right," said the other pacifically. "Benny Leonard ain't a big man, and I guess he's pretty good. So was the baby that steered Black Sand and won one thousand iron men for daddy. You wouldn't be where you are today if you hadn't got the gray matter. Say, do you believe in haunted houses?"

"I don't believe in haunted houses," Smucker asserted, "nor in the immortality of the soul. I'm away beyond that religious bunk!"

"I didn't believe in haunted houses when I first went up there with Mr. Seymour. I was like you—conceited—bone-headed. I thought I knew it all and then some." The stranger had a cold and compelling eye. He looked at Mr. Smucker in a way that dispelled many of the secretary's theories. He leaned over the table. "It's fine and dandy to hold them beliefs when you ain't been put to the test!"

"I don't get you," said Mr. Smucker irritably. "You will," said the other simply. "I used to be chauffeur for Mr. Seymour up at the Gray house. His two kids died up there. There's a curse on that place. The man that had it before lost his wife. Nothing the matter with her until she went up to Dutchess county. Bo, there's something in the lake there that calls people to it. The man who had it after Seymour and me was warned. Seymour said he went there on his own responsibility. I'll say Seymour was square about warning him. Well, sir, that man was found drowned in that d-d lake. The doctors couldn't find a thing the matter, except he was drowned. It's a bad place to live in. I know! I was there for two years."

The stranger's voice sank to a whisper. "You feel like people are watching you all the time," he went on. "When you wake up, you think there's people at the foot of your bed, and when you switch on the light it seems like you catch them going away out of the tall of your eye. The help won't stay there. They know! Mr. Seymour—he's a lord or something now—brought out an old cook from England. She went bughouse from what she saw."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" Smucker said. "No," said the other. "You ain't got the education to understand. Mr. Hanby may. All I ask you to do, if you want to keep your job, is to try and prevent him from taking his family up there to live."

Smucker bitterly resented the strictures on his education. He thought of many cutting things to say, but words did not come easily. His brain seethed with brilliant still-born speeches. After a time he gathered his wits together.

"It amounts to this," he said. "You want me to warn Hanby before it's too late."

"I don't give a d—n whether you do or not," returned the stranger. "I've got it off my conscience. If you want them to go to their death, it's up to you. Any man taking his family there is killing 'em, just as much as if he fed 'em strychnine in their soup. What do I get for this? Not a d—n thing! I'm out a dinner."

"That," said Smucker quickly, "is your own financial liability."

"I'm no piker," said the other. "Hey, Pat, bring a couple of them cigars that Morgan smokes, and some black coffee. My friend here has an important date."

CHAPTER II

At nine o'clock Mr. Smucker stood outside the Gothic entrance of the

building where Hilton Hanby maintained a duplex apartment. Mr. Smucker was in an unusual frame of mind. Whereas his viewpoint was often confused, and his rebellion a silent one, he now saw things with a dreadful clarity. He was vocal. He told the subway guard that ere long those who cheerfully wore the livery of oppressing capitalists would be offered the opportunity to revolt. If they refused, they would toil in deep mines, abject serfs of an emancipated proletariat.

When the liveried elevator starter at the Hanby apartment house intercepted Mr. Smucker and desired to know his business, the Weehawken philosopher saw in this precaution only another instance of the tyranny of the rich; and when, after some delay, he was shown into his employer's rooms, he was overripe for speech. The girl who opened the door looked at him coldly as she demanded his name.

"Tell Hanby, Smucker is here!" he said loudly. "A. Smucker!" "I asked your name, not what you were," she retorted.

"My name is Smucker—Adolf Smucker—and Hanby has to see me at once!"

He was shown into a small room, which led, as investigation proved, to a gallery running along one side of the apartment. Below him was a



"What Do I Get for This? Not a D—d Thing! I'm Out a Dinner."

spacious drawing-room. Through an arched opening Smucker could see a party of diners. Dining, and it was past nine o'clock!

This, then, was what a duplex apartment meant. The Smuckers had never been quite sure. They were certain only that it was a symptom of the criminal extravagance of the un-taxed rich, won at the cost of the workers.

"Old Smucker here?" Hanby exclaimed. "Are you sure?" He turned to his wife. "Dina, do you hear that? Smucker from the office is here."

"That odious little man! Well, he won't mind waiting until we have finished. You'd better send him a cocktail or something. You can't leave us, just as you are going to spring this great surprise." Dina Hanby turned to one of the servants.

"Mary, ask Mr. Smucker to be kind enough to wait, and ask if he'd like a cocktail. See if he will leave a message."

Mr. Smucker looked at the cocktail greedily. Some day pretty girls like this one in neat black and white should bring him cocktails when he thirsted; but they should not sneer at him. If they sneered, they should be lashed.

"Mr. Hanby asks you to wait," said Mary Sloan, not softening the blow. "He's busy. They're in the middle of dinner."

"At half past nine?" "That's what I said, Mr. Mucker." "Smucker, Smucker!" "As he won't be through yet awhile, Mr. Smuckersmucker, do you want to send a message?"

"No!" the man roared. "I won't! Absolutely I will not! Tell him and his wife I come on a matter of life and death. Tell him to leave his boon companions for a moment, and he will go back to them a saddened man!"

With the possible exception of Adolph Smucker, Hanby had not an enemy in the world. His children adored him, and his help remained, until removed by marriage or death. Mary hurried back. She was interested in the announcement her employer was about to make. He was

Speedometer in Use Long Before "Autos"

It may surprise those complacent people who think that everything that counts was invented within the last century, to hear that speedometers—and they seem pretty modern devices—were brought into use centuries ago.

on his feet when she reached the dining room.

"Family and friends!" he began. "Best of families, best of friends! I stand before you tonight at the ripe age of four and forty. I have not only an announcement to make—I have also a confession. I have concealed my name from even my wife. You have hitherto known me as plain Hilton Hanby."

"Not exactly plain," his wife laughed. "I could never have married a plain man!"

"Best of wives!" he murmured. "I have deceived you. Almost half a century ago my mother was drowning in one of our picturesque rivers. A handsome stranger sprang in and rescued her. Later they were married, and her first son she called by the name of that superb stream. My true name is Housatonic Hilton Hanby. At college they called me Tony. When I married I dropped the name because my wife was from Cleveland, and would not have understood. Tonight I resume it publicly. There are reasons. I am now lord of the manor. I have territorial obligations. Boys and girls, I have been a hard worker, and I have prospered. Fifteen years ago, when I was young in the woolen business, I took, in payment of a bad debt, sixty acres of land near Los Angeles."

"And you've struck all there?" asked Celia, his eldest daughter. "No—this is a true story. I have subdivided what was formerly a rocky, goat-infested hill. It is now Hollywood, famous as the queen of hillside residential parks."

"Dream on!" said Junior, Hanby's son, who was a Yale sophomore, and therefore given to doubting the enthusiasms of his elders.

"No dream, my worthless lad, but a fact! I have the money. Half of it I have spent this afternoon. Know, beloved ones, that I have realized the ambitions of a lifetime. About a hundred miles away, near the peaceful village of Pine Plains, Housatonic II, Hanby owns a lovely estate. In this historic home, this feudal fastness, he will dispense hospitality of the sort his position entails. On his private golf course his friends will pry gods of turf from their beds as they now do weekly at Wykazyll and Garden City. On his tennis courts, grass and concrete, his children will play under his able tutelage, until they go in triumph to Forest Hills. There Sir Housatonic has a lake, wherein bass and trout await the anglers' fly. There his children will find a swimming pool—not yet built, however—which will make the best that Pasadena and Hollywood have to offer look like frog ponds."

"Oh, dad!" Celia cried. "Is this real, or do we wake up now?" In answer he passed photographs around. The Gray house was a fact, not a mere hope.

"Wonderful!" said Mrs. Bishop, one of Dina's close friends. "But the help problem in a thirty-room house is appalling. You won't get any one to stay."

"Mary!" Hanby called out. The girl was arranging glasses in the anteroom. "You heard what I've been saying?"

Mary flushed a little. "I couldn't help it, sir," she apologized. "Go and ask the others if they'll come to the Gray house."

"They'll come," said Mary eagerly. "Ask them," Mrs. Bishop commanded. "New York help simply hates the country. We tried it out, and we know."

Mary came back. "They're crazy to go, sir." "I don't know how you do it," said Mrs. Bishop.

"It's easy," said Hanby. "We treat 'em as if they were human. Hanby started as a strange but somehow familiar voice broke in.

"They gave a feast the night before Waterloo!" shouted the voice, from the distant balcony.

"It's that Mucker," Mary said. "The idea!" "Smucker," Hanby corrected. "I had forgotten all about him. Tell him I'll be there in a moment."

"He's got his nerve!" said Junior. "Besides, the people who gave the feast before Waterloo won the battle. Dad, I hate that man! I wish you'd fire him. Whenever I go to the office, he tries to head me off from seeing you."

"He wishes to save me money," said Hanby, rising.

Mary descended wrathfully on Smucker. He was conscious that his intellectual superiority was lost on her. In the slangy, expressive phrase of her class, she gave Smucker her opinion of him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Coal Often Referred to in Pages of Bible

In the authorized version of the Bible—the English translation made in the reign of King James I—the word coal represents no less than five Hebrew words. The first and most frequent word is that meaning a live ember, burning fuel. In II Sam. 22:9-13, "coals of fire" are put metaphorically for the lightnings proceeding from the Almighty. In Prov. 25:22 there is the proverbial expression, "Thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head," which was adopted by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, 12:20, and by which are metaphorically expressed the burning shame and confusion which men must feel when their evil is requited by good. In Prov. 26:21 are these words: "As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife." Here the word coal clearly signifies fuel, and the fuel meant is probably charcoal, and not coal in the common sense in which we use the word.

Saving Famous Woodlands

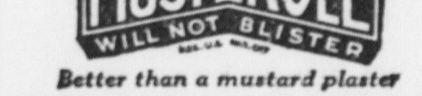
The states of New York and Massachusetts have joined hands in the effort to head off forest fires. The conditions this year led observers to believe that there would be unusually early outbreaks in the woods, and in order to combat these the usual force of wardens has been augmented by the appointment of 1,800 others. The Catskills and the Adirondacks and other wooded sections of those states have been and are being given full protection against the fire menace.

Grandmother Knew

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Grocery, Meat Market, established 20 years; state of Virginia; well stocked, wonderful fixtures; doing \$1,500 weekly; owner retiring; will sacrifice for \$2,500. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Graham-Paige Auto Sales Agency, and Garage, state of Virginia; doing excellent business; also property covering 1/2 of city block; account other interest will sacrifice to quick buyer. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Grocery, Meat, Notion Store; state of Virginia; doing \$2,000 yearly; well stocked, excellent fixtures; owner having other interest will sell for \$4,500. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Mattress Factory, state of Virginia; established 5 years; no competition; fully equipped; all new machinery; doing \$1,000 yearly; owner having other interest will sacrifice. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Millinery Store, Richmond, Va., established 20 years; all up-to-date fixtures; account dissolving partnership will sacrifice to quick buyer. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Grocery, Meats, Vegetables; state of Virginia; established 13 years; doing \$1,000 annually; corner location; up-to-date fixtures; also 6-room brick building; excellent paying business; owner retiring; will sacrifice. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Drug Store; Norfolk, Va.; established 5 years; doing over \$15,000 annually; rent \$45; fully stocked; owing to illness must sacrifice; \$1,800. Empire Brokers, 152 W. 42d St., N. Y.

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