The Bradford Reporter.

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Judge Jessup having resumed the practice of the law in Northern Pennsylvania, will attend to any legal business intrusted to him in Bradford county. Persons wishing to consult him can call on H. Streeter, Esq., Towanda, Pa., when an appointment can be made.

HENRY STREETER,
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TOWANDA, PA. Feb 27, '79

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Having accepted the agency of the LANCASHIRE INSURANCE COMPANY, (Assets over $12,000,000 00.) I am prepared to write policies at current rates.
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TOWANDA, PENN'A
Office—South side Public Square, opposite Ward House. Nov. 14, 1878.

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ATTORNEY-AT-LAW.
Office—Mercur Block, Main st., over J. L. Kent's store, Towanda. May be consulted in German. [April 12, '78.]

W. J. YOUNG,
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TOWANDA, PA.
Office—Second door south of the First National Bank Main St., up stairs.

DR. S. M. WOODBURN, Physician and Surgeon. Office at residence, on Pine Street, East of Main.
Towanda, May 1, 1877 tf

W. B. KELLY, DENTIST.—Office over M. E. Rosenfelt's, Towanda, Pa. Teeth inserted on Gold, Silver, Rubber, and Aluminum base. Teeth extracted without pain. Oct. 24-72.

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Office over Montanye's Store. Office hours from 10 to 12 a. m., and from 2 to 4 P. M.
Special attention given to
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G. W. RYAN,
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Office day last Saturday of each month, over Turner & Gordon's Drug Store, Towanda, Pa.
Towanda, June 20, 1878.

C. S. RUSSELL'S
GENERAL
INSURANCE AGENCY
May26-70tf. TOWANDA, PA.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK,
TOWANDA, PA.
CAPITAL PAID IN.....$125,000
SURPLUS FUND..... 66,000
This Bank offers unusual facilities for the transaction of a general banking business.
N. N. BETTS, Cashier.
JOS. POWELL, President. April 1, 187.9

MRS. H. PEET,
TEACHER OF PIANO MUSIC,
TERMS.—$10 per term.
(Residence Third street, 1st ward.)
Towanda, Jan. 13, '79-1y.

MILLS.—The undersigned having leased the old Sanlsbury Mill, would solicit the patronage of the community. Custom Work done immediately and in good order. All leaks in the Mill have been repaired and hereafter it will be kept in good order. Feed, Flour, Meal and Bran constantly on hand. Cash paid for grain at Masontown.
HENRY W. WELLS.
Monroeton, June 17, 1880.

NOTICE.—All persons are forbid cutting Timber on the lands of the late Edward McGovern, in Overton Township, without the written consent of the undersigned, under the penalty of the law.
JOHN McGOVERN, Executor.
Overton, May 3d, 1880-3m*

A WORD ABOUT WORDS.

Ah me! those terrible tongues of ours!
Are we half aware of their mighty powers?
Do we ever trouble our heads at all
Where the jest may strike or the hint may fall?
The latest chirp of that "little bird"
That spicy story, "you must have heard"—
We jerk away in our gossip rash,
And somebody's glass, of course, goes smash.
What fames have been blasted and broken,
What pestilent sinks have been stirred
By a word in lightness spoken,
By only an idle word.

A sneer—a shrug—a whisper low,
They are poisoned shafts from an ambushed bow,
Shot by the coward, the fool, the knave:
They pierce the mail of the great or brave,
Vain is buckler or wisdom and pride
To turn the pitiless point aside;
The lips may curl with a careless smile,
But the heart drips blood—drips blood the while.
Ah me! what hearts have been broken,
What rivers of blood been stirred
By a word in malice spoken,
By only a bitter word.

A kindly word and a tender tone—
To only God is their virtue known!
They can lift from the dust the abject head,
They can turn a foe to a friend instead;
The heart close-barred with passion and pride
Will fling at their knock its portals wide,
And the hate that blights and the scorn that sears
Will melt in the fountain of childlike tears.
What ice-bound griefs have been broken,
What rivers of love been stirred
By a word in kindness spoken,
By only a gentle word!

—*Sunday Magazine.*

The Mysterious House.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"Large and roomy; well furnished; good garden; healthy neighborhood; within easy reach of a railway station; good boys' school near; not far from London; cheap!" Thus, with something more than a suspicion of scorn in her voice, my sister Margaret ran off on her fingers the list of my requirements for a house.

I had just returned from India with my six children, and I was anxious to settle them comfortably before their father's return.

"You want every comfort," continued my sister, "and you don't want to pay for every comfort. I believe you Anglo-Indians think we live upon nothing in England."

Her husband came in as she spoke. Turning to him, she ran over again, with a slight exaggeration and a deeper infusion of contempt, the catalogue given above.

He took a seat. "Difficult," he said, oracularly; "but it might be done. I have it!" said he, turning to his wife.

"What? The right house? Then you are cleverer than I thought you."

"Do you remember the story Williams told us yesterday?"

"Now, James," said my sister, rising to her feet, and looking at her husband severely, "if you advise Elanor to take that house, you do it on your own responsibility, I wash my hands of it."

"Sit down again, Margaret," he said. "Be reasonable my dear. Is there any sufficient reason why Eleanor should not take that house?"

"There is one very good reason—she will have to do all the housework herself. No servant will stay a week."

"She has an Indian servant at any rate, who must stand by her."

"But think of herself, of her feelings. You smile, James. Oh, yes; I know you think me absurd. Very likely I am absurd; but remember this—there's no smoke without some fire. Besides, I knew the last tenants. Mrs. Green is not an idiot. She told me—"

"Stay a moment," said my brother-in-law, and he addressed himself to me: "Eleanor, tell me truth; are you a believer in ghosts?"

"Does this mean that the eligible house is haunted?" I exclaimed, much stimulated by what I heard. "If so, I will take it at once. Write to the agent for me, James."

"I do believe you are all going mad," said my worthy sister, holding up her hands in horror. "James, you are a sensible man. You know things ought not to be done in a hurry. Eleanor, listen to what I heard from the last tenant. She told me with her own lips; it is none of your second-hand stories—"

"No," I interrupted; "don't tell me. If there is a ghost it will show itself. If there is not, I might be set thinking of your story, and might imagine it; or at least"—correcting myself—"I might be betrayed into telling somebody else. Somebody else might imagine it."

My brother-in-law thereupon entered into an elaborate description of the house, which had everything I could desire, and he believed I could have it for a rent which was so small, considering its advantages, as to seem merely nominal. "The fact is," he said, "their principal object is to have the thing off their hands. Tenants have been coming and tenants have been going, and some have paid and some have not paid. The place has got a bad name in the neighborhood. The owners, however, think that if a respectable tenant comes and stays for some time, it will have a good effect on the public mind. But, as Margaret says, you must count the cost. Your servants will be sure to hear the ghost story. They will see visions and dream dreams. You may have to do a good deal of the work yourself. By the by, there is an old housekeeper, a Mrs. Weevil, who lives in the lower rooms."

"Could we not get rid of her?" I said. "She might tell the servants."

"I am afraid that would be easier said than done," he answered. "She has some claim upon the family. But they say she is a quiet old soul, who interferes with nobody. You might warn her, you know."

"Well," I said, "let us write to the agent, and see what can be done."

The result of all this was that, a week or two later, on a placid afternoon early in the month of August, I drove up with my children, servants, and luggage before the deep porch of one of those moderately sized country houses which abound in the County of Surrey. It was to be my home for the next twelve months—servants and ghosts permitting.

For once, description and the expectation that followed hard upon it were, I felt, abundantly justified. My earthly paradise was a paradise indeed; and joyfully, on the evening of our arrival, I sat and wrote to my husband of our good fortune. The house was beautifully situated, and was itself picturesque, with its deep porch in front and the neat balcony that surmounted it. It was an irregular building, and its red brick walls were half smothered with ivy and clematis. Beyond the garden in front was a broad lawn, bounded by the grand old beeches and elms which form a belt round Lord B——'s estate. During the first few weeks, nothing happened to change my good opinion of the house.

There was one circumstance I did not like; but I persuaded myself it was trivial and to be affected by it, proved ultra-sensitiveness; besides, I had been warned beforehand. Two of the lower rooms were occupied by an old woman. She was a pensioner, I was told, of our landlord. Many years ago, she had been housekeeper to some relatives of his, who lived in the house, and she had lived in it ever since. I wished to see her and have some conversation with her. I disliked, in the first place, that any one of whom I knew nothing should be in my house; and in the second place, I was anxious to warn her to keep the ghost story (whatever that might be) secret. My three English servants were north-country girls. I had taken good care that they should be utter strangers to the neighborhood; but I knew, if the possibility of seeing a ghost were suggested to them, they would promptly make the possibility a certainty, and then my troubles would begin.

I sent a polite message to Mrs. Weevil, asking for an interview, and she came to my room. She was not a prepossessing woman. Her age might be somewhere between sixty and seventy, and as she dropped an awkward courtesy on entering my presence, I felt she was giving me a homage which she did not pay willingly. I said I understood she had permission from the owner of the house to occupy certain rooms it it.

"Yes, ma'am," she said; "but not from the owner as is the owner of the house now, ma'am."

She manifested, I thought, a certain ill-concealed sulkiness as I went on to ask her if she could not be induced to find accommodation for herself in some of the cottages on the estate, so as to give us the house to ourselves. She stubbornly refused.

"No, ma'am," she went on to say. "I am an old woman as has lived here for nigh twenty years, and I never gives trouble to no one. I only wishes to be let alone; and I means to stay, ma'am—yes, I means to stay."

I saw that it would serve no purpose at present to try to dissuade her, and as I did not wish to quarrel with her I changed the conversation. I said I understood there were some foolish stories current about the house being haunted, and I hoped, whatever she thought of it, that she would say nothing to my servants on the subject."

"If your servants 'll let me alone, ma'am, I'll let them alone. I has no wish to meddle with any lady's servants."

I then permitted her go. She was certainly no trouble about the house, and she was very seldom seen either by me or the servants. She only went out occasionally, as if to make such purchases as her necessities might require, locking the door of her rooms both in going in and returning.

A month passed by. People in the neighborhood began to call. They all praised the house and grounds, but they all looked mysterious and one and another hinted, "You won't stay here over the Winter."

My answer was a smile. But the Winter came. Flowers faded; trees grew red, golden, brown; and at last their shivering leaves fell to the ground. It was an early winter. In November, the cold was intense, and the days were short and gloomy. Many years had passed by since I had spent a Winter in England, and I felt the cold very much. I made the best of things, however, muffling myself and the children in flannel, keeping the doors and windows closed, and having large fires in the rooms and hall. In spite of all I could do, two of them fell ill. Their illness was not serious, but nursing and looking after them gave me much to do, for their ayah (Indian nurse) was suffering at the moment from a severe cold, which rendered her almost incapable of helping me.

Such was my position when, one morning, my house-maid asked to see me. I knew what this meant; and was not surprised to hear that she intended to leave us that very day. Her mother wanted her, she said. I asked her mother's reason. She was impenetrable. I offered her higher wages. She said tremblingly, that she would not stay if I were to offer her a hundred pounds. I began to perceive that the news of the ghost-story had got abroad, and I asked her if there was anything in the house of which she was afraid; but to this question she was dumb. I said I would see her again, and sat down to think, with my sick child in my lap. Even while I was thinking, there came a knock at the door of my room. I cried out, "Come in," but my heart sank.

My cook was at the door. The girl who helped in the kitchen and house was behind her. Both looked scared, and announced that they were going.

I did not know what to do. To gain time I ordered them back to their work. I had no money in the house, I said. The bank, as they knew, was some miles distant. They had no right to leave me without due notice; in fact, I would not let them go. So I said, and hoped they were quieted for a time. But late that evening the ayah came to me with consternation in her face. All the three English servants had left me!

By that time the children were in bed, and everything was still. I bade the ayah go to her room with the younger children, and after locking my bedroom door, sat alone, thinking. I had passed through an exciting day. The night was chilly; I was tired, and not very well. That the warmth of the fire and the comfort of my favorite lounging-chair should presently cause a delightful sense of indifference to all and every annoyance, need not be considered wonderful. As I sat there, I gave way to the pleasant compulsion, and was soon, I imagine, fast asleep. I say I imagine, because there was no witness present; and of what we do, or what we don't do, in that strange indefinite border-land of sensation which separates waking-time from sleeping-time, we can never be perfectly certain.

So far as I know, I slept for some considerable time. It was the sensation, I believe, of my feet waxing cold that first loosened the bonds of slumber. While I was in that semi-unconscious state, which has a peculiar discomfort, I became dimly alive to the fact, that there was in the room some presence other than my own. There was movement—a stirring air, as if some creature had come in. The events of the day returned to my memory, which was still only half alive. I started up, rubbing my eyes, for I could not be at all sure that I was awake and in my right mind.

When I went to sleep I was alone. Yes, certainly. But even if it were not so, what strange pale face was this now gazing at me across the dimly-lighted space of the shadowy room? I was but half awake. My nerves were in an excited state. The ghost in the house had been my last conscious idea. And now this strange face, which seemed to be advancing on me out of the gloom, was it a creation of my own fancy? Or was it some one playing a trick upon me? In my case, now was my time to fathom the mystery. Trying to be courageous and gather my wits together, I advanced. The face receded, and passed into the deeper shadow, till it appeared to be suddenly swallowed up in the draperies of the heavily curtained window. I rushed forward, but was not swift enough. Before I had touched the curtains, the face had disappeared. I was certain, however, perfectly certain, that as I drew the curtains open I felt resistance to my hand, and at the same time a gust of colder air rushed against my face, as if from an opened window. At first, I felt as if about to faint; but my will, fortunately, was strong, and I threw the curtain aside, and put my hand on the window. It was closed. I tried the bar, which could only be fixed from the inside, and it was as I had left it early in the evening.

At this discovery my agitation overpowered me, my head swam, and I fainted. When I recovered consciousness, I was lying in the broad recess of the curtained window, and I felt a trickling sensation on my forehead, and suspected, what I afterward found to be the case, that I had struck my head on some article of furniture, and was bleeding. This involuntary blood-letting helped to revive me, and I sat up.

For a few minutes I remained partially stunned and bewildered. I felt a creeping sensation, as if I had been struck by a frost-wind. After a while, my heart began to beat less audibly, and I rose to my feet. At that moment the embers of the fire suddenly sank to the bottom of the grate, sending up a faint flickering light, which was absolute cheerfulness as contrasted with the horrible semi-darkness that had hitherto prevailed. I felt my courage returning, and managed to ring the bell. The ayah came, alarmed that I should have summoned her at an hour when she supposed I had retired to rest. I din not tell her what I had witnessed, only asked her to light a candle. She did so, and as the light fell upon my face, she gave a slight scream. I had forgot at the moment that blood was trickling from the wound I had received, or I should not have asked her to light the candle. As it was, I had to make the best excuse I could in answer to her inquiries. I said I must have slept long by the fire, and in moving about the darkened room had fallen and hurt myself. The wound, however, was found be a mere scratch; and in a few minutes the ayah had succeeded in removing from my face all marks of the disaster.

I asked her to leave the candle with me and allow me to retire to rest. She did so; and after the door was closed upon her I proceeded with the candle to examine the window more minutely. The mystery was as much a mystery as ever. The window had certainly not been opened by any one, and no trace was visible on the walls of any possible means of ingress or egress. I felt more nervous than ever, and was about to turn and leave the room altogether, so much did my fears oppress me, when something lying on the floor attracted my attention. I stooped and picked it up. It was a small piece of white cloth—a few inches square—very frail in the texture, as if half-rotted with damp or age, and adorned with a peculiar kind of embroidery such as I thought I had seen before, but could not recall where. On one edge there was a hem, the other three edges being irregular and jagged. It looked like a piece of cloth wrenched out of a garment by the foot being suddenly placed upon it. I felt I had made a discovery.

Returning to the fire-place, I sat down to think. It seemed clear to me now that my visitant, however he or she had effected an entrance, was no spirit. This piece of linen was certainly not lying there when I had closed and barred the window for the night; nor could it belong to the apparel of any member of my household. It was not unlikely that it was part of the loose garment of dingy white which I now remembered my strange visitant wore.

I am naturally strong-minded, and gradually began to recover my composure. I said to myself: "I shall find out the secret. The first link of the chain is between my fingers. I never before heard of ghosts tramping bits out of their drapery, and no doubt the ghost I saw had been nearly as much afraid as myself when I so suddenly approached it, and had not got away without a little flurry. This accounts, too," I thought, "for the resistance which I felt to my hand when I first laid hold of the window-curtains."

I was more than ever persuaded that a trick was being played upon me. I did not feel, however, as if I could sleep in the room that night. If my visitor was, as I suspected, a mortal like myself, there was no saying what he or she might be induced to attempt should the desire of revenge prompt a second visit. My life was not safe in such circumstances, when a barred window and locked door were not sufficient to protect me from intrusion. I resolved for that night to occupy the bedroom where my two eldest children slept, which I could reach without disturbing the rest of the house.

I was about to take up my candle and go, when I imagined I heard a sound behind me. In my state of nervousness, I started, and had almost dropped the candle. I looked toward the window; but the curtains hung motionless, and were parted as I had left them.

A thought struck me. If my visitor were to return after I had retired, how should I know? I pondered the matter a little, and then proceeded to action. Trickery must in this case be met by trickery. I went up to my work-box, took out a reel of thread, and drew off a few yards. There were curtain-fasteners on each side of the widow, about two feet from the floor; and between these I stretched and made fast the length of thread, so that no one could enter the room from the window-recess in the course of the night without unconsciously breaking the frail barrier I had erected. This would afford me sufficient proof as to whether the privacy of my sleeping-room had again been invaded. Taking up my candle and the bit of cloth, I then passed quietly out, locking the door of the room, and carrying the key with me. I felt myself stronger in the presence of my children, and soon managed to fall asleep.

CHAPTER II.

My first quest next morning on leaving the apartment where I had slept was for the purpose of ascertaining whether my bedroom had been again entered after I had left it on the previous evening. I unlocked the door, and cautiously looked in. Enough light came through between the drawn curtains to show me that the room was apparently as I left it. I advanced to the window and found the thread there, unbroken, and evidently untouched. I must confess I felt somewhat disappointed. My fears had probably exaggerated my conceptions of the danger, and I had anticipated a second visit as more than probable. After thinking, however, I came to the conclusion that it was better as it was. Had my strange visitor for any purpose entered my room a second time, and found that I had quitted it, the effect might have been the reverse of favorable to a discovery of the trickery, which discovery could best be forwarded by my making as little change in my usual habits as possible. It was not improbable, seeing that no suspicion had been aroused by the knowledge that I had changed my sleeping apartment, that the "ghost" might be emboldened to pay me a visit on the following night; and by that time I hoped to be able to arrange for the interception of my strange visitor, and the detection of the trick.

In the course of the morning I had made up my mind how I should proceed. Mrs. Weevil generally left after breakfast on her errands to the neighboring village or elsewhere, not generally returning for a few hours; and I thought this a good time to obtain an interview with Andrew, the old gardener, who, I saw, was engaged trimming the walks in front of the door. I had no doubt now that what I had seen had been also appearing to the servants who had so suddenly departed on the previous evening; and I had no doubt also that Andrew knew the whole story about the ghost having been again seen in the house. I opened the parlor window, and spoke with him over the balcony. "Will you come up stairs, Andrew? I should like to see you."

He stood for a moment, scratching his head. I think he would have preferred anything to entering my house at that moment; but evidently he did not see his way to refusing. A few moments later he was in the drawing-room.

"Andrew," I began, with some intentional solemnity of manner, "you see the position I am in." His expression indicated that he considered the position an exceedingly unpleasant one. "The story has got about," I went on, "that this house is haunted." He turned pale. "You think it *is* haunted?" I asked, looking at him fixedly.

He hesitated for a few moments, shook his head slowly, and succeeded finally in saying: "What *is* folks to think, ma'am?"

"I acknowledge," I answered, "that the thing has a queer look. When people appear, and vanish as suddenly as they came, it is difficult to think of them as creatures of flesh and blood like ourselves."

"Tain't possible-like," was Andrew's comment; and I observed that with the words, his face took a more healthy hue. The quiet tone I had assumed reassured him. Ghosts, when they can be reasoned about, lose half their terrors.

"No," I answered him; "it is not possible. But Andrew, if we look at these things from another point of view?—

"Be there another?" he eagerly asked, as I paused to allow time for expression of opinion.

"Yes," I said; "there is another. Before I believe in your interpretation, Andrew—before I believe it possible that spirits can wander about the world for no other reason than to frighten people, I must test mine."

His eyes, awakening to new interest, were looking at mine inquiringly.

I explained at once. "What I mean is this. I suspect a trick. Somebody has a spite against the owner of this horse—somebody has an interest in keeping it empty."

Andrew was naturally shrewd. As I spoke there came into his face a new look of keenness. He smiled. "There has been queer things done," he observed with a cautious impartiality.

"You have been here some weeks," I said. "Have you heard anything during that time about this house, about the people who own it? I am told they lived here once."

Thus stimulated, Andrew told me that the house and grounds had originally belonged to Lord B——, father of the present lord, whose park was commanded by our front windows. On the marriage of a favorite sister with Mr. Roupel, a man somewhat beneath her in position, he gave her the house. Here the married pair lived, in much unhappiness it was said; and here their only child, a daughter, was born. After running through his wife's money, the husband died. When left alone, the widow, and her now grown up daughter, determined to let their house and live abroad. The rent of the furnished house, with its excellent garden, would bring them in an income sufficient to enable them to live quietly in some foreign town. But while this project was being discussed, the widow died, suddenly and mysteriously. An inquest was held over her; for strange suspicions were circulated abroad. The verdict was that she had died of the family complaint—heart disease. But there were those who still spoke mysteriously about the circumstances of the death, and declared that the lady had met with foul play.

Now, this was the germ of the ghost story, for it was said far and near that Mrs. Roupel, if she had really been murdered—and murdered by her own child, as some dared to whisper—would never rest in her grave. And when singular appearances came and went, and strange sounds were heard in the house, now empty save for an ancient housekeeper, the suspicion, scarcely spoken of at first above breath, so dark it was and monstrous, was by and by openly discussed.

On this part of the story old Andrew was ready to dilate. He warmed to the theme, indeed, and would willingly have given me, had I desired it, a full and particular account of the various people who from time to time had been driven from the premises. But I, holding still to my point, that *trick* had to do with it, restrained his flow of language, and endeavored by close questioning to find out what he knew about the daughter of Mrs. Roupel, who, if his story were true, was the present owner of the haunted house.

I elicited the following facts. Miss Roupel was nineteen years of age about the period of her mother's death. She was then a young lady of high spirit and cheerful temper; she was accomplished, witty, and unusually attractive in appearance. Thus, in spite of the drawbacks entailed by poverty, and a sad melancholy mother, the young lady was not without suitors. The suit of one of these was, according to her mother and herself—they remembered their old antecedents and were proud—little short of an impertinence; for the man was no more nor less than Lord B——'s house steward. The old housekeeper, to whom, before he bestowed the house upon his sister, the old lord had apportioned two rooms, was Mrs. Weevil, the steward's mother.

It was natural that Miss Roupel, niece of his former employer, should reject his suit with disdain. It was perhaps no less natural that the rejection, imbittered by contempt, should sink deeply into the steward's soul. The fact was, that from the day when he was forbidden the house where his mother lived, the young man changed. People spoke of his black looks, of his hard ways, of his cruel, cynical speeches, and some predicted a bad end for him.

Meanwhile, Miss Roupel, now left alone by her mother's death, married Mr. Egerton, a man from a monetary point of view, scarcely more eligible than the steward. He was a Lieutenant in the Navy; but as he had nothing in the world but his pay, they carried out Mrs. Roupel's plan of letting their house furnished, believing it would bring them in a sufficient income to enable the young wife to live in comfort while her husband was away from her. But, as Andrew remarked, if this was her belief, she must have been often "sore pinched," for the house could have brought in very little.

I thanked him for his story. "Now," I said, "you must do something for me. Go to the village at once. Find the carpenter and blacksmith. Tell them I want them on important business. There must be no delay. I will pay them well for their work. Do you understand?" For the old man was staring at me as if he thought I had taken leave of my senses.

"I understan'," he answered slowly. "But what will you be wanting with them, ma'am?"

"You will know all in good time. They must bring their tools. Now go, Andrew, go quickly. And mind, Andrew," I added, "say nothing to any one of your errand, and bring the joiner and blacksmith in by the back entrance, for I do not wish them to be seen coming here to-day by everybody."

Notwithstanding these bold words, I must confess that when Andrew started on his message, and left me alone—for the ayah had gone down to the village—I felt a little uneasy. I did not believe in spiritual presences, but I did believe in wickedness driven to desperation. I was bidding defiance to a foe of whose resources I was utterly ignorant. What if my defiance should be taken up? Mentally I felt strong enough, physically I was conscious of being weak, but I set about the performance of my household duties, which occupied me fully till the return of Andrew.

I took him, as also the joiner and blacksmith, into the parlor, and told them my experiences of the previous evening. Andrew exhibited symptoms of alarm; but I found the joiner a sensible man, and inclined, after what I told him, to take a similar view with myself of the situation, namely, that we were being made the subjects of some diabolical trickery, in order to drive us out of the house. He asked about Mrs. Weevil, and if I had ever been in her rooms. I said I had not. He proposed at once to visit them. The door of her apartments was, as usual, locked; but the blacksmith had little difficulty in successfully picking the lock, and effecting an entrance for us—Andrew being meanwhile sent to keep a look-out in the garden, that no one approached the house unawares.

There was nothing to attract attention in Mrs. Weevil's apartments. The joiner carefully examined them, but no means of egress from either of the rooms could be discovered, save the door by which he had entered; the windows having iron gratings outside. We took the utmost care that nothing was disarranged; and any piece of furniture or apparel which we had occasion to disturb was replaced exactly as found. Previous to this, I should have mentioned, both the joiner and blacksmith had made a particular examination of the bow-window of my bedroom; but had failed to find anything to awaken suspicion in the slightest. Our search had so far been entirely fruitless; and I was beginning to feel more perplexed than ever as, after what Andrew had told me of Mrs. Weevil, and of her son's former relations to the owner of the house, I had somehow begun to connect her in my mind with the mysterious appearance which had given it such a bad fame.

We were in the act of quitting the housekeeper's sitting-room, afraid that she might return before we had had time to refasten the door, when I noticed the blacksmith kneel down on the floor of the inner apartment, and examine the foot of one of the bed-posts. It was an ancient Elizabethan; with heavy faded hangings, and stood on a floor covered with a carpet, out of which long use had extracted almost all traces of its original pattern. At a signal the joiner stooped down beside him; and I then observed that the caster at the foot of the bed-post was glistening with oil, as if it had but recently been lubricated; and we all three then noticed that there was a distinct dark oily streak along the carpet, as if the bed had been moved forward obliquely for a few feet from where it stood, and then moved back again. The joiner at once rose, and taking hold of the bed found that he could pull it forward easily and without making the slightest noise, till it was about a foot from the wall against which it stood. At this point we noticed that the bed seemed to dip slightly to one side, as if something were yielding to its weight; and at the same moment we observed a paneling slightly open in that part of the wall which had formerly been hid behind the hangings.

I was in a high state of excitement and with difficulty could suppress my feelings, but stood silent as the two men went round and looked into the opening thus discovered. They asked for a candle, which I presently brought them, when we found that the recess was a small place, about five feet high and two deep, and that it was formed of solid mason-work on all sides but the front. A box, large enough to fill the whole space of the bottom, was attached to the wall by strong iron staples, as if to prevent its removal; but curiously enough, the box itself was not locked, though supplied with a hasp and padlock. The lid was at once lifted, when we saw stuffed into it, as if hurriedly, a mass of white garment, which we found to be an old chasuble or surplice, that must have formed at one time part of the ceremonial robes of a priest. We brought it forth to the light, and examined it; and there, in the skirt of the garment, we found that a piece had been torn out, which was exactly fitted by the bit of white embroidered cloth which I had picked up in my bedroom on the previous evening. This was evidence indisputable that, whoever or whatever my ghostly vision was, here at least was the garment that had been worn on that occasion; the more so, that attached to the upper part of the garment was a kind of hood which, when drawn over the head and face, would give in a dim and uncertain light the grim aspect that I had seen on the previous evening. I felt within me a burning indignation that for years the peace and happiness of successive families in the house should have been destroyed by the wretched trickery of this depraved old woman, in her malicious desire to injure the young lady who owned the house, by depriving her of the income that would otherwise have been derived from it.

My first impulse was to leave things as they were in the apartment till the arrival of the old hag, and confront her at once with the evidences we had discovered of her malevolent pratices; but on a second examination of the box, it was found that it contained a false bottom, easily removed, under which were found a pair of loaded pistols. This struck us as being scarcely in keeping with the idea that Mrs. Weevil alone was cognizant of the mischievous operations which had been carried on here for so many years. These were rather the weapons of a person who was both able and willing to use them should an emergency offer. And what was still more puzzling, while we had thus far discovered the means by which the ghostly reputation of the house had been maintained, there was as yet no trace of the manner in which access was gained, either to the bedroom which I occupied, or to any other parts of the house which had been so mysteriously visited. In these circumstances, it was agreed at once to replace everything as we had found them, except that the blacksmith took the precaution of drawing the charge out of both pistols, stuffing the barrels afterward to the required depth with paper, so that, on being probed, they might still appear as if loaded. This done, the bed was moved back to its place, when the paneling of itself closed as before. We then left the apartment, the door of which was, though not without some difficulty, so fastened as not readily to excite the woman's suspicion that it had been tampered with.

It was now two hours after noon, and Mrs. Weevil might return at any moment. The two men therefore departed, but first arranging with me that they should return after dusk, bringing the village constable along with them, to await with me the events of the evening, as I felt certain somehow—that the "ghost" would again appear, with the object of driving me from the house, as other tenants had been driven before.

Like his namesake in "Rob Roy," the old gardener, Andrew, was not a very good keeper of secrets; hence it was proposed that the joiner and blacksmith should take him along with them to the village, and keep him under surveillance till the evening. I was glad when I saw them all out of the place, without, so far as I knew, being seen by any one; and still more glad when the ayah shortly afterward returned with the children, as I could not help feeling alarmed in the house by myself, considering what we had discovered, and especially what we had failed to discover, namely, how the person playing the ghost could obtain access to different parts of the house so freely as report represented, and as I had myself in one instance painfully experienced.

CHAPTER III.

Unlike her usual practice, Mrs. Weevil did not return to the house that day till far on in the afternoon; and after she had entered her rooms I could hear her bustling about with an activity and noise quite unprecedented in my experience of her habits. This rather alarmed me. I was afraid she had suspected, from the appearance of her rooms, notwithstanding our care in removing all traces of our presence, that some one had been there in her absence; and this might be sufficient to defeat my hopes of bringing to light the trickery that had been so long and so systematically practiced. But I was still more astonished when, about an hour after return, she sent a message to me by the ayah that she wished to speak with me, if I would grant her an interview. At first I scarcely knew what answer to make. Were I to refuse to see her, this might complete the suspicion which she perhaps entertained; and if I did see her, I was afraid that I might by some word or look betray the knowledge of which I had become possessed. I thought upon the whole I had better see her, and answered accordingly.

As she entered the room with a basket on her arm, she dropped a courtesy; and from the flow of words with which she at once opened the conversation, she seemed to put on a frankness of manner which I had not before observed in any slight intercourse I had had with her.

"Yes, ma'am," she went on, "I were just a-comin' ma'am, to say as I would be goin' from the 'ouse for a few days; my son, as is steward to Lord B——, being took very badly last night, ma'am; as he have no one to wait upon him, it holds as I, ma'am, as his mother, must do my dooty—yes, ma'am."

All this she said without once stopping to take breath; and I could not help observing that she was slightly flurried in my presence, and seemed to keep talking as much to hide her uneasiness as to enlighten me regarding her errand. I said I was very sorry to hear that her son was ill, and that it was very proper she should, in the circumstances, attend to him. "But," I asked, "has he no servant in the house?"

"Not presently, ma'am," she answered; "leastways, the 'ouse-maid have gone away over to Brookford for a few days to see her mother, who stays there, ma'am—yes, ma'am;" and she courtesied again in the excess of her civility.

After I had dismissed her I did not know what to think. This was an interference with my plans on which I had not counted. I had no one to advise with me, and felt much perplexed. As evening approached, and the gloom of twilight, I had a strange, nervous feeling, such as I had only once before experienced, and that was in India during the terrible days when the mutiny was at its height, and every footfall made us start as if next moment were to be our last. As the dusk deepened, my anxiety increased; and when at length the ayah conducted the joiner, as I had before instructed her, to my room, I was almost too overpowered to speak. Andrew and the blacksmith were for the time detained in the kitchen, as I wished to talk the matter over with the joiner, as the most intelligent of the three.

As he entered my room, I was surprised to find a second person behind him, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Burrows, the district Inspector of Police, who had been on an official visit to the village that day, and who, when he heard the story, volunteered his services in place of the constable. His presence at once gave me great relief; and this was enhanced when I found he had had long experience in the London detective force, and was entering with the enthusiasm of his profession into our plans. He had heard already from the joiner what had passed that day; complimented me highly on the presence of mind I had displayed on the previous evening and expressed acquiescence in everything that we had since done.

When, however, I mentioned to him my unexpected interview that afternoon with Mrs. Weevil, and that she had left the house, he was a good deal taken back. He questioned me closely as to her manner and appearance when she was in my room, and as to whether she seemed much aff